

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

H169b

v.1

NEW AND POPULAR NOVELS.

In 3 Vols. Price 31s. 6d.

FIRM IN THE STRUGGLE.

By EMMA PICKERING,

Author of "Forsaking All Others."

"The story is extremely interesting, and never flags for a single page. We scarcely know a fiction of modern times in which the characters are equally well sketched and sustained. Many of the descriptions of country life and country scenery are quite equal to those so admirably depicted in 'Adam Bede.'—*Daily Guardian*.

"The Author rises into the higher regions of literary lore."—*Bell's Messenger*.

"This novel is fair and fresh as May flowers, and deserves for its ability of treatment and purity of tone the highest praise."—*Drawing-room Gazette*.

"Miss Pickering has taken for her model Miss Burney, Miss Mitford, and Miss Austen."—*Brighton Examiner*.

In 3 Vols. Price 31s. 6d.

ROBERT BLAKE OF RINGWOOD.

From the *Times*, January 8th, 1872.

"It commands the respect due to a pure and wholesome tone of thought, and seeks to interest us by legitimate delineation of character, rather than to thrill us by the startling turn of an ingenious plot. It neither demoralizes our moral nor bewilders our mental faculties."

In 3 Vols.

LANGLEY MANOR.

By MRS. C. J. NEWBY,

Author of "Wondrous Strange," "Kate Kennedy," "Common Sense," &c., &c.

—Railways, postages—in a word, all the numerous facilities of the age—have almost annihilated distance, and, as a natural result, caused an individual trade between country customers and London establishments. Those who do not visit town, so as to select and purchase directly, send for patterns from which they can give their orders. But as all apparent advantages on the one hand have more or less their corresponding drawbacks, so this system is not without its bane. Pushing tradesmen make a market by offering goods at lower rates than they can possibly be sold at to realise a fair profit. The bait traps the unreflective, and the result is that the receipts *en masse* are not equal to the tempting samples. There is no new invention in this; it has been practised in wholesale merchandise and by candidates for contracts, as the proverb hath it, since there were hills and valleys. But we grieve to add it is sometimes resorted to by those whom one would credit for more integrity. Ladies, therefore, need exercise caution, and place confidence only in houses of old-established fame, for rapidly-made businesses are not generally reliable. And to what does this assertion amount more than to the fact that nothing great can be effected not only without labour but without time, and that Rome was not built, as the old saying says, in a day? Messrs. Jay, of Regent-street, whose name is well known amongst the few on the list of *bonâ fide* establishments in the metropolis, have adopted a plan for assisting country ladies in choosing for themselves London fashions and fabrics. And their customers may rest assured that they will thus be enabled to obtain goods of every quality, both low and high priced, at the most reasonable terms—that is, the terms of small profits for quick returns—and that they may firmly rely upon the thoroughly corresponding character of samples and supplies.—From the *Court Journal*.

THE BRIDAL BAR.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

J. PANTON HAM.

“ My project may deceive me,
But my intents are fix'd, and will not leave me.”
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

VOL. I.

LONDON :
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1872.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

823
H169b
v.1

THE BRIDAL BAR.

CHAPTER I.

AGAINST THE GRAIN.

“Oh, Claude, this one is a clever sketch; I’m sure it’s a portrait, it has all the look of one; but surely something of a caricature. Who is it meant for?”

“That fellow is one of the proctors, a very ferret, thoroughly hated by all the fellows. No, it’s not a caricature—not in the least exaggerated, I assure you, Polly.”

Claude Threlfall had just returned from Cambridge, and was showing the contents of

his portfolio of water-colour sketches to his cousin Mary and sister Julia. Mary Threlfall was examining one after the other with the intensest interest, and laughing merrily at the facetious humour exhibited in some of these personal reminiscences. Julia, although she could not restrain an occasional smile, looked on in silence, and with an expression of face indicative of serious concern.

“Really, Claude,” exclaimed Mary, taking up a more finished drawing of some university celebrity, “this is positively clever—it’s admirable! How you have improved lately. I couldn’t have thought you capable of doing anything like this. And, pray, who is it meant for?”

“That’s the Rev. Dr. ———, Master of ———.”

“Good gracious, Claude!” shouted Mary again, “and what in the world are all these fellows about? Something droll, I see; but what does it all mean?”

“Oh!” exclaimed her cousin, “I really

didn't know that thing was among the sketches," and he snatched it from Mary's hand, rolled it up, and thrust it into his coat pocket.

Mary's curiosity was the more excited, and she expostulated with her cousin for his rudeness in snatching it away.

"What are they all about, Claude?" she asked again.

"Oh, you won't understand it if I tell you. I did it for one of the fellows, and thought I had given it to him. Just a practical joke which some of us played on a sneaking fellow, that's all."

"Now, do let me look at it again."

"No, no; it's not worth looking at, and you really won't understand it."

"I won't be put off so, Claude; I will see it. Why can't I understand it?"

"Ladies never amuse themselves in that kind of way. You won't see any fun in it. There, don't bother any more about the stupid thing. I ought to have left it behind me."

Mary was not at all satisfied with these replies, and continued coaxing her cousin to let her see the sketch.

Claude, in the hope of diverting her attention, turned towards his sister, and said,

“The sketches don’t seem to interest you, Julia, as much as Mary.”

“I like to look at them, Claude ; but what a large number of them you have.”

“Oh, I’ve given as many away as I have here.”

Julia looked very thoughtful.

“I see,” said Mary, “Julia thinks you might have reserved some for us.”

“You may both of you take as many as you like of these,” returned Claude.

“I was not thinking that,” explained Julia. “I was thinking what uncle will say when he sees all these drawings. You know, Claude, he would be very angry if he knew that you had been painting so much. You must recollect what he told you before you left us at the beginning of the term.”

“Yes, yes, I recollect all about that ; and shouldn’t have brought out my sketches, of course not, if he had been at home ; but he can’t be down from London for an hour at the earliest, and I knew you and Mary would be amused by just looking them over.”

“I do so want to look again at that one in your pocket, Claude,” said Mary, with playful persistency. “I was so struck with the number of the figures, and their great variety of attitudes. No posture of the human form seems impossible to your clever pencil. Indeed, I’m not at all curious about the subject of the picture. It’s the artistic skill that interests me.”

“Here’s another,” said he, turning over the drawings, and spreading them about the table in search of the one he wanted ; “here it is. If you want quantity, you may count some fifteen fellows there.”

“Why,” shouted Mary, “that central figure is yourself, Claude. What a capital likeness ! What are they all about ?”

“Well, that’s a scene in my room. The picture is historical, and represents the formation of the literary staff of a new serio-comic weekly journal. That fellow sitting down has just been appointed editor, and I have been elected artist to illustrate the letter-press, or rather the pen and ink contributions.”

“What an interesting picture, Claude,” said Mary, with a look of admiration. “May I have it?”

“Yes, certainly; but I can’t spare it yet, as I have engaged to make a large copy of it. They are all likenesses, and I hope to finish it during next term.”

“But, dear Claude,” said Julia, “you must be doing nothing else at Cambridge but sketching and painting.”

“Not much else, I confess,” replied her brother, with a smile of self complacence; “the fact is, I can’t for the life of me give myself to reading. I shall never take my degree, that’s certain.”

“Not take your degree, Claude! Haven’t you taken your degree, then?”

“No, not I.”

“But uncle quite expects you have. I do so dread his hearing of it.”

“Oh! he knows it; I wrote to tell him I was plucked. I shall go back again you know.”

“But not to work, Claude?”

“Not to work! Indeed I shall work. I intend to begin that picture in earnest, and shall have it done before I return again to Walmer.”

“You make me very anxious, Claude,” replied his sister. “Do leave the picture, and read hard for your degree. Uncle will be so pleased, and you can amuse yourself with the picture at some future time.”

“Impossible, Julie; all these fellows are portraits, and I must execute the work while I am with the originals. Every fellow will have to give me two or three sittings.”

“Of course,” struck in Mary.

“But uncle did not send you to Cambridge to paint, you know, Claude, and if he hears how you have been engaged he will be dreadfully provoked with you.”

“He’ll know nothing about it.”

“But you will come home again without your degree.”

“O ! lots of fellows are plucked, and lots never think of taking their degree at all. Don’t bother me, Julie, any more about that confounded degree.”

Julia said no more, but sat looking at her brother and cousin, who were quite absorbed in the sketches, and every now and then indulging in bursts of merriment over some humorous drawing, while Claude was elucidating the character or incident.

Julia could not at last resist the contagion of their laughter, and gradually became as much interested in the sketches as they. All had their heads together, as they bent over one comical sketch, talking and laughing boisterously, when the door opened, and to

the amazement and confusion of each, in walked Uncle Threlfall, who had just arrived from Dover.

“Well, Claude, you’re here before me. How are you, my boy, how are you?”

Claude responded to the cordial greeting of his uncle, who stood just inside the doorway, wrapt up in his travelling coat and warm cravat, for it was a sharp frosty night in December. He had his uncle’s hand, shaking it heartily before he had taken three steps into the room.

Mary and Julia were at the side of Claude, anxious to prevent any further advance into the drawing room, the latter betraying more confusion than her cousin Mary, who was most assiduous in her attentions to her father, in her anxiety to get him out of the room.

“What are you about, girls?” said the old gentleman, advancing another step forward, and staring at the table covered with the drawings, which, without his spectacles, were not

clearly discernible. "What were you so merry about over those papers?"

"Some of my College exercises, sir," replied Claude, promptly, "a few mathematical diagrams, sir, that's all."

"That's all, papa," echoed Mary; "but how cold you must be. Do come into the dining room, there's a beautiful fire there; come along, come along."

"You must want refreshment, uncle," added Julia, who was quite as eager as her cousin to get her uncle out of the room.

"What's the fun, girls?" asked the provoking old gentleman. "Let me see the fun," and he tried again to advance, peering inquisitively at the papers. "Why they are coloured like an architect's ground plans and elevations."

"Never mind those diagrams now, papa; come into the warm dining room and have something to eat," and she and Claude hustled the persistent gentleman to the door.

“ Let me take off your cravat and coat, sir,” said Claude, tugging at the arm nearest the door, with an energy that fairly pulled Mr. Threlfall out of the room.

“ Gently, gently, Claude ; not so rough, my boy.”

Claude pulled to the door after them, and Julia took the opportunity with this hint to gather up all the sketches and replace them in the portfolio, and, when her uncle was safely secured in the dining room, hurried up stairs and deposited the dangerous treasure in her own room.

It was a narrow escape, and Julia had scarcely recovered her composure when she returned to the dining room. Mr. Threlfall, who was now seated in his arm chair by the bright warm fire, was enjoying the exhilarating heat and rubbing his cold hands.

“ Laughing over mathematical figures, eh ?” he said, as he bent forward extending his outstretched palms to the fire. “ I didn’t know

mathematics were a laughing matter to you Cambridge men, Claude."

"Well, no, uncle, not exactly a laughing matter, certainly. Some fellows hate them cordially. As Byron says—

"‘They stare not on the stars from out their attics,
Nor deal (thank God for that !) in mathematics.’”

"What do you want with paints, Claude? I hate paints."

"Oh! we sometimes paint, you know, geometrical figures."

"Do you though? But what were you all laughing at so merrily in those geometrical figures? Let me share the fun."

Mary looked towards Claude, wondering what he would say, yet with no very great concern in her face, as if she had full confidence in the readiness of her cousin's resources. Julia's brow was clouded, as if she dreaded the discovery after all. Claude, affecting a lively interest in his uncle's question, replied by another.

“ You of course know something of geometry, uncle ?”

“ No, I’m sorry to say I don’t, Claude. I never learnt mathematics when I was at school. I left school when I was fourteen ; it was the fashion in my young days to send boys to business at that early age.”

“ Then you’ll scarcely see the joke, uncle, that amused us. Geometers say, you know, ‘*ex æquali in proportione perturbata seu inordinata*,’ a term employed when the first magnitude is to the second of the first rank, as the last but one is to the last of the second rank ; and as the second is to the third of the first rank, so is the last but two to the last but one of the second rank ; and as the third is to the fourth of the first rank, so is the third from the last to the last but two of the second rank, and so on in cross order ; and the inference—”

“ That will do, Claude, I don’t understand a word of what you are talking about ; it seems to me the veriest gibberish.”

Both the girls, who sat staring at the cool impudence of Claude, as he rattled off this 20th definition of the 5th book of Euclid, which he had by heart, fairly exploded, and the uncle now joined them as Claude gravely offered to demonstrate this definition by a theorem.

“No, thank you, Claude, it’s all Greek to me, of which I know as much as of Geometry. So that was the fun, eh? Well, it does sound very like a joke, Claude. So that’s Geometry, eh? How you get it into your head I can’t tell; and when you’ve got it, what’s the use of it, eh?”

“It’s precious hard work, I can tell you, uncle, to cram all the definitions, postulates, axioms, problems, theorems, and corollaries of the six books of Euclid. You get horribly confused with permutandos, invertendos, componendos, dividendos, and convertendos. Do you know I broke down in these confounded mathematics. What would you make of this theorem, uncle? If several ratios be the

same with several ratios, each to each, the ratio which is compounded of ratios which are the same with the first ratios, each to each, is the same with the ratio compounded of ratios which are the same with the other ratios, each to each?"

"Make of it," exclaimed Mr. Threlfall, "I can't make head or tail of it. It's as confounding as if you were to ask me what relation I am to my father's second cousin's great uncle's wife's eldest daughter's grandmother's niece."

"Well, you can't wonder that I've been plucked at mathematics, uncle. But I'll try again if you like; of course my wish is to please you in the matter. I ought to have gone to Oxford, uncle; I should have done better at classics."

"Say no more about the degree, my boy. I confess I was vexed when I heard you were plucked. But if you can't get a degree without cramming your head with all that farrago

give it up, give it up, Claude. You'll only muddle your brains for no practical end. I'm quite decided now. You shall not go back to Cambridge."

"Not go back to Cambridge, sir!" exclaimed Claude, wondering what scheme his uncle was concocting for the future.

"No, it's time you were doing something to some purpose. I've had some talk with Paget; he and I travelled together to Dover. He quite agrees with me that you ought to read for the Bar. I intend you to be a barrister, Claude. It will be five years before you are called, as you have not taken your degree, and so there's no time to be lost."

Claude was not at all prepared for this sudden termination of his university career. At Cambridge he had found ample time to prosecute his favourite study, and now as he had got something like a sanction to be idle, the temptation was very strong to get back to his university.

“I should like another year at Cambridge, sir,” he said, “just to read up my logic. Logic is very useful to a barrister, sir.”

“No, you must not go back to Cambridge, Claude; that’s settled. Paget’s son is going to the Bar, and is already a student of the Inner Temple. He was at Oxford, and is an M.A., so that he will be called in less than three years. You don’t know him, but you will have an opportunity of making his acquaintance in London. He’s a hard-working, clever fellow, is young Hawley Paget, and will make his way at the Bar. Now my plan is that you go after Christmas to London, and begin your legal studies forthwith. I shall allow you £300 a-year, till you can make your own way in your profession. Mind, I expect you to make that sum do for all your expenses. No getting into debt, understand that, distinctly; and don’t forget what I have impressed on you, that you never touch the painting brush. If you were a painter, Claude, though I love you as my own son, I

would leave you to shift for yourself, and I wouldn't leave you a shilling in my will. I know your predilection that way, but I won't have it. Your father made a pretty mess of his painting. You quite understand that, I know. I have chalked out your career for you. You are to be a barrister, and I'll not grudge a few thousands to help you afterwards into the House. You must be an M.P. I once thought of going into Parliament myself. But you'll make a better figure there. Get your silk gown, my boy, and who knows but you may become Solicitor or Attorney General, or rise to the Bench. You have talents, Claude, and if money can help you, I'll back you to any reasonable extent. Now, what do you say?"

Claude knew that what his uncle had set his heart upon was not to be resisted, and therefore he at once assented. The prospect of five years independence in London was pleasant enough, and as he knew that he should have little else to do to qualify himself

for the English Bar than to keep his terms at his Inn, and eat his commons, he saw at once that the change was for the better. In London he would have splendid opportunities of indulging his bias. What might he not do in five years? He would attend the Academy, and by the end of that time might be far on the road to the attainment of his highest ambition—a recognized place among the great living masters of his art! He closed at once and heartily with his uncle's offer, and went to bed that night in high spirits, with his head full of plans for the future. Julia came into his room just to whisper that his portfolio was quite safe in her custody, and Mary could not retire for the night before she had congratulated Claude on his ingenious escape from the dilemma about the sketches.

“What rubbish you did talk, Claude,” said Mary, as she bade him good-night, “about geometry. Poor papa has been made quite a fool of to-night.”

“Not a bit of it, Polly, darling. I learnt

all that out of some fellow's Euclid. It was a happy thought; I knew it would dumb-found uncle, and excuse me my plucking."

"So you are going to be a barrister, Claude, and an M.P.?"

"Yes, both, my pet;—a barrister for certain, and a Magister Pictorum if possible."

"You are a naughty fellow, Claude," and Mary kissed her naughty cousin, and tripped noiselessly to her own room.

CHAPTER II.

THE WEIGHT OF A BIAS.

MR. THOMAS THRELFALL had early discovered in his nephew and foster-son that artistic bias against which he had so resolutely set himself. Claude, when quite a child, would sit for hours together sketching every object that interested him, and once was so successful as to make a tolerably suggestive drawing of his uncle as he sat fast asleep in his chair. He soon, however, discovered that what was a source of infinite enjoyment to himself was frowned upon with disfavour by his uncle, and

at last he never ventured to be seen with pencil and paper in his uncle's presence, whom he avoided as much as he conveniently could, and indulged his amusement on the sly. His sister, but especially his cousin Mary, would join him on these furtive occasions, and, as such opportunities were precious, he learnt to make good use of them, and gradually acquired considerable skill in the delineation of form. The products of his juvenile labours were all carefully treasured by Mary, whose love of art was quite as strong as that of her cousin Claude, only her line was landscape while his was figure drawing ; and the kindred tastes of these two young folk brought them constantly together, and intensified their friendship for each other. Everything had to be managed with the strictest attention to secrecy ; and the scheming and manœuvring that were necessitated to enable them to indulge their bent without interruption by degrees made them both adepts in the arts of deception. They would neither of them

scruple to tell the most impudent lies to escape detection, and thus very early in life they learnt the art of dissembling to perfection. Julia, who knew the necessity of privacy in the pursuit of this unconquerable passion of her brother's and cousin's, kept their secret, but she was constitutionally a frank, truthful child, and would blush deeply with a sense of shame at the lying effrontery of her companions' lips, and no less effrontery of falsehood in their frequent assumption of hypocritical appearances. Uncle Threlfall watched Claude, as he thought, with the eye of a lynx, and congratulated himself, as time went on, that he had been successful in rooting out a passion which he considered it a parental duty to destroy.

Mr. Threlfall's hostility to his nephew's predilection for art was not founded in any constitutional antipathy to art itself, for he was a lover of paintings, and considered himself a good judge of a picture. A wealthy man, and living in some style in his hand-

some house known as the Grange, he had purchased from time to time many pictures, for some of which he had paid high prices, and, consequently, his walls were as well covered with this species of decorative furniture as a gentleman's residence is usually expected to be. He had no objection even to the society of artists at his own house; indeed, would have been glad to receive them to display his technical learning in the mysteries of their profession; but he denied himself this pleasure, purely in consideration of his nephew's welfare, whom he intended to guard in every way from the seductions of an artistic life, to which he knew that he was passionately inclined.

Mr. Thomas Threlfall was a well-meaning, kind-hearted man, but he was no philosopher, and had no theory of education. His knowledge of human nature was very limited, being circumscribed by his commercial experience during a long and successful career as a merchant in Mark Lane. Every son he

considered ought to follow in his father's steps, if his father had been commercially successful in life, and ought most scrupulously to avoid his parent's career if it had been a commercial failure. He considered biasses mere wilful obstinacies, and particular aptitudes mere eccentricities and perversities.

Now Claude's father had made a miserable failure ; he had lamentably broken down early in life both in fortune and health, and he, Mr. Thomas Threlfall, came to the not very logical conclusion that if Claude started in the same line as his father, it would be infallibly followed by the same deplorable results. For many years he had retired from business, and had no longer any connection with the firm in Mark Lane, or he would have unhesitatingly placed Claude in the counting-house there, and felt perfectly satisfied that he would do as he himself had done, and somehow because he had done it, that is to say, realize a large fortune. His younger brother, the father of Claude, had started with himself in the old

counting-house, but William Threlfall was an artist by nature and inclination, or as his elder brother would say, he was eccentric and perverse, and he had thrown up all his splendid commercial prospects to follow the profession he loved. He succeeded fairly, for he made a living, and might have made a name for himself and a fortune to boot ; but he fell in love with a pretty-faced young actress who was not faithful to him, and by the time she had borne him two children, Claude and Julia, he was overwhelmed with domestic calamity, and died of a broken heart. Mrs. William Threlfall, of bad reputation, had no resource but to return to the stage ; and Mr. Thomas Threlfall, being at that time childless, offered to take the entire charge of the two children, and to provide well for them, on the condition that the mother would resign all parental control over them, and withdraw herself from the family connection. This was at once assented to by Mrs. William Threlfall, who was not unwilling to be rid of the burden of

providing for her children, and to be again as free as an unmarried woman. She pledged her word that she would never see her children more, and agreed, on the receipt of £100, to go to America and try her fortune in New York. Mr. Threlfall took her passage for her, and saw her leave Liverpool for her destination. The vessel in which she sailed never reached its destination. A homeward bound ship had sighted, in mid-Atlantic, the burning hull of a vessel, and had cruised about in search of her boats, but had descried nothing. Nothing was ever afterwards heard of Mrs. William Threlfall, and it was concluded that she had been one of the sufferers by this ill-fated catastrophe.

Now, if uncle Threlfall had cultivated the habit of reflection a little beyond the sphere of his commercial circle and relations, if he had looked a little more philosophically into the constitution of his species, and marked the variety of human tastes and proclivities, he would have seen the absurdity, and even danger

of insisting on a practice which, if rigidly followed in every instance, would be one of the greatest calamities to the first-born in all civilized communities, and a serious damage to the well-being of society itself. It was never suggested to him, in his unreasonable hostility to his nephew's taste and inclination, that he might be resisting one of the distinctest voices of nature which was uttering itself so ineffectually in his dull, deaf ear. And when he shook his head in grave and pained displeasure at the discovery of his nephew's cool impudence and hypocrisy, which he often had occasion to do, he never dreamt that he had himself to thank very largely for this sad defect in Claude's character, who had been driven by a natural and irresistible impulse to act in a manner which was not necessarily natural to him. The fine tone of his nephew's moral feelings had been jarred by the discord of his unfortunate circumstances. He was denied what nature bade him so peremptorily to claim, and as his artistic passion was strong,

even in his childhood, when his moral principles were naturally feeble, the strong bias made every pure moral feeling kick the beam, and he grew up affectionate and generous, certainly, for he was constitutionally such, but at the same time a keen-witted, crafty, plotting, unscrupulous fellow. To hoodwink and out-manceuvre his uncle, in this affair of his profession, he regarded as thoroughly fair play; and if lying and deception best served his purpose, he had been so long trained in these habits that they came quite natural to him, and rarely gave him the least remorse, or even the feeblest sense of moral uneasiness.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE THRELFALL MORALIZES SAGELY, AND
COUNSELS DESPATCH.

AT the time when our story begins Claude had reached his twenty-second year, his sister Julia was in her twenty-first year, and his cousin Mary just nineteen. Claude was neither dark nor fair; his complexion was ruddy, and his head was ornamented with a rich, curly crop of dark chestnut hair, which, after the fashion of artists, he allowed to grow very long. His features were handsome, and he stood just five feet ten inches in height,

and possessed a well developed and rather robust frame. Julia was in complexion and features very like her brother, rather under the medium height, plump and well formed, and her calm, thoughtful face, very attractive in repose, was peculiarly winning when lighted up with any joyous emotions, and always beamed with geniality and thorough good nature. She had an innate love of truth, not in the least ostentatious, but conspicuously natural, and shrunk instinctively from everything, whether in speech, demeanour, or action, which was merely specious, and seemed to lack the solidity of what was really right and good. Her love of literature inclined her to studious habits, and she was passionately fond of Shakespeare and all the best dramatic writers, which she read repeatedly. In fact her tastes were decidedly histrionic, and her cultivated mind and refined feelings would have fitted her, had her lot been so cast, to take a respectable position in the higher department of the mimic art. She

read and recited admirably, and the evenings at Walmer Grange were often passed most agreeably in this way, her uncle enjoying the entertainment she afforded, and betraying no anxiety about her theatrical predilections, as he intended to raise her above the necessity of self-dependence by bequeathing her a handsome fortune.

Mary Threlfall was a little taller than her cousin Julia, graceful in figure and of a sanguine, excitable temperament. Her rich dark complexion, adorned with a copious profusion of luxuriant hair inclining to black, bright dark hazel eyes, which sparkled like jewels in their animation, and looked at you with an earnestness and a depth of penetration in the excitement of conversation, invested her handsome face with a charm which every one acknowledged and felt. Full of vivacity, recklessly impulsive, she was often betrayed into indiscretions of conduct, but her excitable temperament was controlled so effectually by a dominant goodness of heart

and generosity of disposition, and was withal so buoyant in its gaiety, that she had seldom to mourn over the effects of her loss of self-command, and her companions were never at any time embittered by the rampancy of her indiscreet feelings. She loved her cousin Claude with all the ardour of her strong womanly affections, and he returned her passion with no less intensity. Their kindred tastes and dispositions inclined them also to a constant companionship, and at this period they were pledged lovers, with the full sanction of Mr. Threlfall, who encouraged their mutual attachment, and looked forward to their happy union.

Julia and Mary, though differing widely in some respects, were very much alike in disposition. Each loved the other with the tenderness of sisterly affection, and Claude was the idol of both.

After Claude's return home from Cambridge, and while the weather was fine and frosty, the open air attractions of riding and

walking passed the days pleasantly enough. The Grange is about a mile and a half from Walmer, lying inward from the sea coast, and in about a direct line with the Castle. The country, though pretty, and the air bright and bracing, is not remarkable for scenic variety and picturesque beauty. Somewhat closed in by well-grown trees and shrubberies, and standing alone, with the nearest neighbour a quarter of a mile distant, the Grange would generally be thought a rather dull and monotonous residence, but the present inmates had abundant resources in their special tastes and employments, and, though they rarely had any visits but an occasional one from their friends the Pagets, who lived several miles away, in a suburb of Dover, they never complained of *ennui*, and were never tired of their seclusion. Mr. Threlfall had a well-furnished general library, and of late years had found abundant amusement in biographical reading, with which he had a considerable acquaintance. He delighted in

perusing the lives of successful men, and would often entertain his family circle with reminiscences of interesting incidents which he had treasured up in his memory. He had been a widower for many years, and all his happiness centred in the three young people whom he loved alike as his own children. Although Claude could scarcely have been dearer to him had he been his own son, yet he had no idea of making a prosperous man of him at the expense of his daughter and niece. For the girls he intended to make a handsome provision, and Claude would come in for a good share of his property; but as he himself had been in large measure the builder of his own fortune, and admired all men who had been similarly successful, he wished Claude to rely chiefly on his own abilities and energies, and, by his industry, lay the foundation of his success in life. He would certainly add something substantial in the end, but his nephew, he was determined,

should be a self-reliant man, and make, not only a good start, but a good progress in the race of life.

Christmas had come and gone, and the new year opened with a heavy fall of snow, which continued for two or three days, and all were enforced prisoners. Uncle Threlfall was buried in a favourite biography—the life of Sir William Blackstone; Julia was deep in some old dramatist; Claude was in his own room; and Mary was preparing her materials to go on with a water-colour drawing.

“Polly, my dear,” said the father, looking round from the comfortable enclosure of his high-backed easy chair, which, was turned towards the blazing fire, “what, going to paint? Don’t paint, Polly; just oblige me by putting those things away while Claude is at home. You understand me, dear. I don’t want Claude to have any temptation put in his way. He has pretty well, by this time,

forgotten all about his paints, I'm glad to know. Now, you'll oblige me, darling, won't you, and get about something else?"

"Certainly, papa, if you wish it; but Claude knows I paint a good deal."

"Yes—yes, very likely; but I don't want him to see you at it. Out of sight, you know, out of mind. There, put them away—put them away, girl, before he comes into the room."

Mary was not quite pleased that her favourite amusement was to be sacrificed in this way to her papa's whim, as she considered it, about Claude's temptation to painting. Besides, she knew that Claude needed no temptation, and that probably he was then shut up in his room and thus employed, for she heard him give orders for a fire to be lighted there, and she guessed what that meant.

"Papa," she said, "I don't think Claude will be coming here for some time; he is very busy this morning in his own room."

“Never mind, dear; put them away—put them away. I don’t want to see any paints about while he is in the house. I tell you what, Polly; if you don’t touch your drawing materials while Claude’s here this Christmas, you shall have your wish, darling. Yes; I’ll let you have lessons in water-colours when he’s off to London. When he’s gone, you may make inquiries in Dover about a teacher.”

“Oh! thank you, papa,” and Mary leant over her papa’s chair and gave him a kiss, and then hurried out of the library with her colour-box and portfolio.

Claude, as Mary had guessed, was locked in his bedroom, and working away stealthily at an enlarged copy from one of his sketches.

“Who’s there?” he shouted in answer to a gentle tap at the door.

“It’s only I; open the door, Claude,” replied a voice, a little above a whisper.

The door was opened, and Mary slipped in through the narrow space afforded for her entrance.

“I knew what you were about. May I come in and paint, too? Papa has made me promise to put away my drawings while you are at home. Let me sit with you, will you, Claude? There’s nothing to do this miserable weather; and I mustn’t paint downstairs.”

“Come along, Polly; there’s plenty of room, and a capital fire.”

“How snug it is, Claude, isn’t it? Oh! you sly fellow; I knew what you were about.”

“Don’t talk so loud, chick. Nobody must know you are here, you know, in my bedroom.”

“I often come here when you’re not at home, you know. That wardrobe is too big for my room; that’s why it’s put here, and I often want to come to it.”

“Well, if any of the servants come, you must be fumbling in your wardrobe.”

“Oh! nobody will come. It is so delici-

ously snug here. What are you working at ? Oh ! I see ; the head of that Master of ——.”

Mary opened her portfolio and unlocked her colour box, and was soon busy at her landscape.

“ They’ll be coming, perhaps, to bring you coals presently, Claude,” she said, after a while.

“ No they won’t ; look here, I’ve got the breakfast-room box full.”

“ You think of everything, you cunning fellow.”

“ What’s that ? ” asked Claude, in a whisper.

“ What’s what ? ” replied Mary, in the same suppressed tone of voice, and looking up inquiringly in her companion’s face, which was betraying some alarm.

“ It’s papa’s step,” continued Mary, “ coming along the gallery ! He must be coming here to your room.”

In the alarm, colour boxes and portfolios

were thrust into drawers and other convenient hiding places.

“He mustn’t find me here,” whispered Mary, looking round bewilderingly for a means of escape.

“Get under the bedstead,” said Claude.

“I can’t; it’s a German one. Look, the sides touch the ground.”

“Get behind the curtains, then.”

“They’re so scanty; he’ll see me if he comes in.”

At this moment the footsteps stopped at Claude’s door, and the voice of Mr. Threlfall was asking for admission, accompanied by a loud knock with his knuckles.

“Is that you, uncle?” shouted Claude, to gain time.

“Yes; I want to have a word with you. Can I come in?”

“Oh! certainly, sir; just wait half a second while I get the soap off my hands.”

Claude signed to his cousin, who had placed herself at the back of the door, that he might

open it wide, and so conceal her. He was pointing to the wardrobe with one hand, while he was splashing about the other in the ewer. In an instant Mary was inside the fortunate refuge, and as Claude turned the key to ensure her safety, she was closely packed in among the skirts of her own hanging dresses, and scarcely able to move.

“I’m in no hurry, Claude,” called out his uncle; “take your time, my boy.”

“All right, sir, you can come in,” and at the same moment, with the towel in his hand, and knocking very unnecessarily his port-manteau about, he unlocked the door, and admitted his visitor.

“So you’ve got a fire here, eh? I was wondering where you were that you didn’t join us in the library.”

“You see, sir, I’ve got a good many things to look to in the expectation of going to London, and I thought I’d take the opportunity of this dull weather just to make a few preparations.”

“Quite right, my boy, quite right; but as you are so snug here I may as well sit down. We can have our little private chat here,” and Mr. Threlfall took the chair which his daughter had just vacated.

“Well,” he began, “you’ll now be leaving us shortly; only another week or eight days, and you’ll be off to town. Let me see, how old are you, Claude?”

“Twenty-two, sir.”

“Ah! twenty-two; and by the time you are called to the bar, you’ll be twenty-seven.”

“Just so, sir.”

“I wish, for your sake, you had taken your degree, for then, you see, you would have been called when you are twenty-five.”

“There’s no hurry, sir.”

“No hurry, Claude! You know you can’t be married till you’re called.”

“Ah! true, sir.”

“And Mary will think five years a long time to wait.”

Mary was thinking just then that she had

been waiting quite long enough in her stifling place of concealment.

“Five years is a long time, sir,” replied Claude.

“Yes, a very long time, and Mary will be twenty-four. Young ladies, you know, Claude, don’t like to be kept waiting too long. However, there’s no help for it. You can’t be married for five years at the soonest, that’s clear; but she’ll wait patiently, I know, I’ve no fear on that head. She loves you, Claude, and is ready to endure anything in reason for your sake.”

At this moment there was a slight creaking noise inside the wardrobe, as if the endurance up to that time had been sufficiently long, and was scarcely longer tolerable. Mr. Threlfall turned his head at the noise, and Claude began to feel uneasy, and to look confused.

“Well, well,” continued the old gentleman, “what must be, must be. We’ll say no more about that; but I want to have a long chat with you about your future arrangements.

Put a few more coals on the fire, Claude ; it's burning low, and the day's bitingly cold."

Again the creaking noise was heard from behind.

"Poor Mary," thought Claude, "she can't endure it much longer."

"What's that noise, Claude ?"

"Only the furniture, sir ; furniture, you know, will make that creaking sound in very damp or very dry weather."

"Very true ; but put a few coals on, Claude," and he drew his chair closer to the fire.

"I'm afraid the box is empty, sir," and he went towards the coal-box, which was half full at least. "Yes, quite empty, sir ; hadn't we better go down to the library, and talk the matter over there ?"

And, thus saying, to make the necessity absolutely imperative, seizing the poker, he raked the remainder of the burning coals out into the grate, and moved towards the door, followed by his uncle. They were in the

library before Claude recollected that he had turned the key of the wardrobe, and therefore Polly was a close prisoner. Feigning some excuse to return for a moment to his room he hurried up stairs, and liberated his poor cousin, who was half-suffocated, and most thankful to be released.

“You see, Claude,” Mr. Threlfall was saying, when Mary joined them in the library, “all really great men have more or less worked their way to eminence through considerable difficulties. You can scarcely mention a name in the long roll of distinguished men but I can tell you something of the almost gigantic obstacles which their indomitable will has encountered and overcome. I like a man to meet with difficulties and obstructions ; it makes him inventive and energetic ; he’s sure to make his own opportunities, and to turn them to good account.”

Mary smiled as she listened to these sage remarks of her father, and could not help thinking, with some feeling of satisfaction,

that her dear Claude had difficulties enough in the way he intended to go, and might be, therefore, reasonably expected to become a great man in his own line of things.

“I quite think with you, sir,” replied Claude, “there’s nothing like difficulties to make a man of a fellow. I like difficulties, thoroughly enjoy them, sir. It was no small difficulty to get into my head those crabbed geometrical definitions, but I resolved to overcome it, and hence I can repeat everyone of them, and almost rattle off every proposition in regular order, beginning at the first book. Another session at Cambridge, and I shall be certain of my B.A.”

Claude’s conscience just then was in a very rattling, reckless mood.

“Say no more of Cambridge, my boy; we must risk no more time. You might not pass after all, you know; and I really don’t care about so much geometry for you.”

“Very good, sir; but I don’t like to be

beaten at anything I take in hand. I'll make another and final effort if you like, sir."

Now Claude had no wish to return to Cambridge on the distinct understanding that he was to take his degree, but he knew that a display of his confidence and powers of endurance and pluck would give his uncle pleasure, and he had no fear that he would alter his mind and put him to the test.

"No, no; no more of Cambridge; you shall work now in another direction. I shall see what stuff you are made of in working your way to the Bar. I've always intended you for the Bar. By-the-bye, I have a few law books on the shelves: begin to read at once, Claude. Here are Blackstone's 'Commentaries on the Laws of England.' Take the first volume, and see if you can't master that before you leave home. You can have a fire in your own room, and give your mornings to the study of that admirable work. Every barrister must have Blackstone at his fingers' ends."

Mr. Threlfall took down the volume he had

mentioned from his shelves, and handed it to Claude, who took it with the semblance of the profoundest pleasure.

“I’ll make good use of the volume, sir, you may trust me. Sir William and I will soon be well acquainted.”

“That’s right, my boy. Blackstone is not an easy book, I believe, and some of his notions gave rise to a good deal of learned controversy, if I remember right; but with your legal ardour and excellent abilities and delight in difficulties, you’ll master him, not a doubt of it.”

“Not a doubt of it, sir; I have a sort of natural appetite for all kinds of obscurities, and the law I know is pretty thickly strewn with these delightful amusements.”

“You’ll succeed, Claude, with such a taste as that, sure to succeed at the Bar. A fellow who can repeat off from memory that geometrical gibberish which so amused us all the night you came home, can cram his head with anything.”

“Do you know, uncle,” said Claude, proud to be acknowledged such a genius by his patron, “this peculiar appetite of mine for all that is profound and obscure inclines me to charge my memory with the most involved passages in every book I study. For example, some of our English writers of repute abound with very abstruse ideas conveyed in language not easy to be understood. I could give you a lot of examples from Shakspeare, for instance. Do you remember Johnson’s definition of ‘network,’ uncle?”

“I can’t say I do.”

“When I first clapped eyes on it, I took to it like a baby to its milk. Here it is, ‘Anything reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections.’ Do you know, although I knew pretty well what network is, yet the moment I read that in the Dictionary I felt it was absolutely impossible that I should ever forget the meaning of the word thereafter.”

“You’ll make a lawyer, Claude, not a doubt

of it, my boy," replied Mr. Threlfall, with a glow of admiration; "you have all the aptitudes for a successful career at the Bar. I knew I was right to destine you for the Bar."

"I'm quite in love with my profession, sir, and shall work at it with a will I can tell you, uncle, when I get to London."

"Begin at once, Claude, with Blackstone."

"With all my heart, uncle, I'll make good use of the eminent old jurist. I'll begin tomorrow morning, sir, but I hope I shall not be disturbed in the hours of study."

This was meant for a hint to the worthy gentleman himself, whose intrusion alone the nephew was at all concerned about.

"Do you know, Claude, it was through reading the life of Sir William many years ago that I decided to make a barrister of you."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, Blackstone, like you, was an orphan

in early life, and was taken charge of by his uncle ; and, like you, had a bias, a very strong and foolish bias, the love of writing verses. He thought he was a child of the poetic muse, but he soon discovered the folly of leaning to his bias. When he had selected the law for his profession, and entered the Middle Temple, he wrote what he called ‘The Lawyer’s farewell to his Muse,’ and from that day he rose in his profession, and eventually became a judge, and the author of that celebrated work which you hold in your hand. Follow his example, Claude. The first thing you do when you get to your chambers in town put your foot on that old foolish passion of yours, and say farewell to the brush and the palette for ever.”

“I’ll exalt my profession, sir ; depend on that, and put my foot on everything else with all the firmness of a truly heroic decision.”

At this moment his eye met Mary’s, which was twinkling with humour, and having first made sure that he was unobserved, he re-

sponded by a wink. Julia noticed this telegraphy between her brother and cousin, and looked as if she did not at all sanction the hypocrisy.

“Have you thought about your Inn of Court?” asked Mr. Threlfall. “Paget’s son, young Hawley, is entered at the Inner Temple. You’ll like to know him, he’s a hard-working fellow—quite an enthusiastic lawyer.”

Claude had no desire to make the acquaintance of this very enthusiastic young lawyer, and had privately resolved with himself to get as far away from him as possible.

“Yes, sir, I have thought over that matter, and had decided on Lincoln’s Inn, but I understand Gray’s Inn is one of the best Inns of Court, and enjoys peculiar advantages; so, with your permission, I’ll decide on joining that.”

“Very good, as you please, Claude. I should recommend you to attend all the lectures of your Inn. The lectures must be very valuable to a law student; and then take my

advice, and attend diligently the chambers of some gentleman in practice.”

Claude thought he could assent to all this with a clear conscience. He had made up his mind to attend lectures, but they were those of the Royal Academy, and besides joining the classes of that illustrious school of art, he hoped to be often in the chambers, that is to say, the studios, of some gentleman in practice.

“Yes, sir ; I shall attend all the lectures, and shall rarely be out of chambers. I fear I shall have little time to make Mr. Hawley Paget’s acquaintance. I intend to stick to work, sir, and shall avoid the temptation of company.”

“Quite right, Claude, quite right. I applaud your resolution, my boy. Never mind acquaintances for the present. Stick to your professional duties, avoid the seductions of company, and wrestle with difficulties like a man.”

“I am glad you approve of my plans, sir.”

“I approve of them entirely, Claude, and I

wish you success heartily. You'll be an M.P. one of these days, I'm sure of it, Claude."

"I hope so, sir."

And the conscientious nephew, observing that his uncle had ended the conversation and resumed his biographical reading, again winked at Mary, who responded by a shake of her head, in which something like approval and rebuke were curiously commingled.

CHAPTER IV.

SNOWED UP.

STILL the snow was falling, and but for the fierce, driving, north-westerly wind, would by this time have covered the ground with a uniform depth of at least six inches, but the violence of the blasts, which had now quite stripped the trees and shrubs of their beautiful winter foliage, had carried the soft, delicate burden into all sorts of inconvenient positions, throwing broad, deep belts of drift across pathways, barricading garden gateways, and making the high road absolutely impass-

able. The whole face of the country, when the occupants of the Grange looked out at their bedroom windows this morning, had undergone a strange metamorphosis. Little valleys had been lifted up to the level of the little hills, which, like other small elevations, had been wont to look down proudly from their tiny height into the depths beneath, and new mimic heights had reared themselves in emulation, and now complacently triumph over their humbled fellows. And the triumph promised to be still more exalted and complete, for the air was thick with the falling flakes, and the wind, like fortune in one of her wildest freaks, was busy at its driving and piling work. The family at Walmer Grange were going to be snowed up, that was plain enough; indeed, they were pretty well snowed up already, for it would be quite a whole day's work for the gardener, coachman, and Thomas together, to clear away the approaches to the house and open the five-barred gate; and when this was done the drift outside would be like a great

military earthwork, equally impervious by besieged or besiegers—a not uncommon mutual disadvantage in active military experiences, and then it would all have to be done over again, for the elements were in earnest, and were working together with a will, the gentle snow playing into the malicious hands of the rude, rough wind, with a resignation and even abandon that was really appalling.

“Snowed up, by Jove!” exclaimed Claude, as he peeped through the venetian blind, shivering in his night-shirt. “The bare trees look like gaunt black skeletons in the surrounding whiteness. How they must shiver!” and with a shiver himself he sprang into bed again to recover and enjoy his last warmth.

“Blackstone to-day,” he soliloquized, as he looked out from the bed-clothes towards the volume of his uncle’s admiration. “Yes, we shall begin with you this morning, old boy, and shall follow your admirable example, and take a firm and final farewell of what we

don't intend to stand in the way of our chosen road in life. I shall begin this very morning with saying farewell to you, Sir William, for ever. Don't be vexed, old fellow, I sha'n't throw you aside altogether. You'll be of some use to me. Yes, I'll turn over your pages, and clap a marker in you—that blue ribbon marker of eight separate lengths tipped with perforated cardboard, which my thoughtful sister Julia gave me when I went to Cambridge to read; but if I read a line of your legal learning, let me be pegged up on my own easel with my head where my heels ought to be.”

At this moment the morning gong sounded through the house, and Claude sprang out of bed, and began to dress himself.

“Shivering, smarting work for those fellows who shave,” he spurted out as he soused his face and beard with soap and water. “What a clean, smooth face dear old uncle has! and he wants me to shave, too, and cut

off this long bushy hair. Poor old fellow ! I know why," and he winked to himself in the enjoyment of his humour, and got a smarting sensation from the soap in his eye. "But, no, sir, I must beg to be excused. Men of my profession cultivate hair. No shaving for me, uncle. Sorry to disoblige you ; but no shaving for me."

After breakfast, Mary said to her cousin Julia, but rather for her papa's ear than hers, something about being up-stairs a good while and arranging her "things."

"You won't care to come, Julia, I suppose," she added, with a look which told her cousin what that feminine but indefinite term "things" meant in this instance.

"No," replied Julia, "if uncle will allow me I shall sit with him in the library."

"Certainly, my dear," said Mr. Threlfall, "we are shut up for to-day, at least, and probably shall be for a week to come. Have a fire, Polly," turning towards his daughter,

“if you are going to be up stairs for long.”

“Oh, yes, papa, I shall have a fire ; it is so bitterly cold this morning.”

“And you, Claude,” continued his uncle, “will begin with Blackstone, I suppose, this morning ? You’ll forget all about the weather in his good company.”

“Yes, sir, I have made arrangements for my first morning with that learned jurist. He’s up-stairs in my room, and I shall hope to enjoy his company.”

“Nobody shall disturb you, my boy. Keep a good warm fire, and we shall not expect to see you till lunch.”

Claude thanked his uncle for the advantages of his literary retirement, and soon left the room. As he passed up-stairs he could not help smiling to himself at the extreme simplicity of the kind old man, whose ready acquiescence in all his hypocritical proposals favoured his own private schemes to his heart’s content. His uncle intended to be,

and was, as far as he could be, a very great obstacle to his artistic ambition ; but somehow everything his uncle proposed and assented to furthered his own designs, and his opposition only served to whet an appetite which was already sufficiently keen.

Mr. Threlfall, by the course he pursued, certainly taught his nephew the value of time, and the preciousness of opportunities ; and was unwittingly affording him, every day of his life, the means of testing, with very special advantage, the truth of his sage moralizing about the pursuit of a cherished career in the midst of difficulties. They were precious seasons to Claude when he could snatch an hour or two by himself for the practice of his art, and that art endeared itself the more to him, for the reason that it was peremptorily forbidden, and had to be pursued in occasional and stealthy moments. His beloved art was most unreasonably and shamefully abused in his individual person, and he loved it all the more ardently for its bad treatment.

A very gentle tap at the door, soon after Claude was comfortably seated at his work, announced the expected arrival of that equally incorrigible young lady, Miss Polly. The door was quietly opened, closed, and carefully locked, before Mary ventured to speak, and then she said—

“ You know, Claude, my things,” laying an emphasis on the word, “ are here ; may I sit with you ? I’ve got no fire in my room, and it is so cold.” At the same time looking at him with one of her arch, half-winking, penetrating glances, which was not to be resisted. “ You’ll not be so hard-hearted as to bundle me and my things out such a day as this ? I’ll not disturb you and Mr. Blackstone. What a miserable day it is !” and she sat herself down and drew her chair close to the fire. “ Dear old papa, how simple he is, isn’t he ?”

“ Do you know, Polly, I’m half ashamed of this deception.”

“ And I’m the other half, Claude. It isn’t right, is it ?”

“No, upon my soul it isn’t. But what’s a fellow to do? It goes against the grain to deceive uncle, and it goes against the grain to give up painting. I wish we had no grain in us, Polly, and then we shouldn’t be so infernally bothered.”

“It certainly is very inconvenient, Claude, but I suppose our human timber wouldn’t be worth much if we had no grain in us. It went a good deal against the grain when I was boxed up in that wardrobe yesterday, I can tell you.”

“But it was lucky it was in this room, wasn’t it? Did you hear what we were talking about?”

“Of course I did; what a lot of lies you did tell, Claude. I’m afraid you are growing a very wicked young man. Lying seems to come quite natural to you.”

“Oh, no! Polly, I don’t tell lies just for the pleasure of the thing.”

“No, I suppose not, but just when it’s convenient. I suppose if it were convenient to

tell me a lot of lies, you wouldn't hesitate to do so, eh?"

"Come, I say, Polly, you're a little too hard upon me. I told those lies yesterday just to get you out of a scrape, you know; and besides, what a big lie *you* told, didn't you?"

"Indeed I didn't; how could I, for I never spoke a word all the time?"

"But you were hiding from uncle in that wardrobe all the time, and I call that a thumping lie, bigger than all my lies put together."

"I didn't enjoy telling it, for I was most uncomfortably jammed in, and almost suffocated. But don't let us talk any more about lies, Claude. I don't intend to tell that thumping lie, as you call it, again, if I can help it."

"You are pretty safe not to be tempted, Polly. Uncle won't come here this morning to frighten us. We shall have three hours quite, all to ourselves."

With this conscientious prelude they both

set to work, after Mary had given Claude a kiss, and told him that she didn't think at all badly of him, and quite condoned all his story telling. Neither seemed to be any further troubled with the moral aspects of their clandestine employment, and their very sensitive consciences did not seem to suffer any further shock while they both talked on occasionally, but always in carefully suppressed tones and half-whispers.

Conscience, however, is a peculiarly restless and obtrusive faculty in the moral constitution of most human beings, and though it had been diverted or hushed for a time, it again became fidgety, and provoked the resumption of the moral question. Quite two hours of their time had elapsed when Mary said, busy with her brush—

“You know, Claude, I think papa is as much to blame as any of us.”

Claude had been for some time in the most perfect enjoyment of his moral complacency, and was thinking of nothing but his work, to

which he was applying himself with engrossing interest. He turned round with a look of surprise, as though he asked for an explanation.

“Blame! what about?” he ejaculated.

“Why, for all our fibs, and little deceptive schemings.”

“Oh! ah! yes, to be sure. I really do think, Polly, uncle has something to answer for in the matter.”

“Of course he has. If it were not for this whim of his, we could do everything openly, and it would be far more pleasant, wouldn’t it?”

“To be sure it would.”

“With some people you can’t be straightforward, Claude, can you?”

“No, you really can’t. If you tell them the truth they don’t like it, and get angry and blow you up.”

“Yes, and then some people are so inquisitive. You can’t be out of the room ten minutes, or take a stroll in the garden, or be

out for a little longer walk than usual, without being questioned as to where you've been, and what you've been doing, and whether you have met anybody, and all sorts of troublesome, prying questions. Of course one don't want to report every little thing, and you must sometimes be equivocal or evasive, or tell a downright fib."

"Of course; that's just it. Those prying, questioning people, are responsible for a lot of one's peccadillos."

"What a lot of fibs people do tell, don't they? I don't think it's possible to live without telling or acting lies now and then."

"But it's very wrong, isn't it, Polly?"

"Well, I suppose it is, because I never feel altogether comfortable when I tell lies."

"Nor I, but one gets used to it. I don't think that lying, like reading, comes by nature, as old Dogberry says. And yet Nature herself tells a precious lot of fibs, don't she?"

“Nature tells fibs, Claude ! I don’t quite understand you.”

“Well, doesn’t she put on a lot of false appearances, and hang out a lot of temptations? But woe betide you if you put any confidence in her illusions, and yield to her seductions.”

“Oh ! come, Mr. Claude, that’s going too far in search of a countenance to our own naughty doings. No, no, that won’t do at all. You and I and all the rest of us must follow the dictates of our own reason, and yield to the impulses of our pure moral feelings, you know.”

“Now look here, Polly ; do you mean to say that Nature never tells downright lies ? Why just look out of the window. There now, isn’t the whole of that snow landscape one big white lie ?”

“Lie ! no—where’s the lie ?”

“Can you see the little dingle now down there ?”

“No, I can’t.”

“And yet you know it is there; but Nature this morning has filled it up to the level of the little hill sides. Don’t you call that a fib? And look at those mounds rising up there; you know they are all snow-drift, and yet Nature would have you believe that they are solid earth and the permanent undulations of the country. Don’t you call that lying?”

Mary burst out into a loud laugh, and immediately afterwards a knock was heard at the door, and a female voice asked if Miss Mary was there.

The loud laugh had betrayed her, so Mary instantly opened the door.

“Oh! if you please, miss,” said her maid, “master’s been asking for you. He says he’s afraid you must be cold, so long upstairs in your bedroom.”

“I’ve done now, Fanny; tell papa I will come to him almost immediately.”

Mary asked Claude to put her “things” away for her, and went below into the library. Claude had still a half hour left before lunch,

and locked himself in till the sound of the gong should summon him from his retirement. Blackstone was opened at page 90, and the blue ribbon marker was carefully inserted for the satisfaction exclusively of his uncle, if he should happen to be curious about the diligence and progress of his nephew in his legal studies.

“ Well, Claude,” said his uncle, as they sat down to lunch, “ so you have stuck well to work, my boy, and what do you think of Blackstone ?”

Claude quite expected some such interesting question as this from his uncle, and had prepared himself with an answer. “ How can a fellow,” he had said to himself before leaving his room, “ afford to have a conscience with such a man as my dear old uncle ? He’ll have a lot to answer for. He forces me to tell lies with his plaguy inquisitiveness. Hang it, I shall be glad to get away from home, if it’s only to keep a conscience.”

“Yes, sir,” he replied, “I’ve not been idle. Blackstone’s a useful book, sir.”

“I thought you’d find him so. But you have had quite enough of his company this morning, I dare say, and will be glad to say nothing more about him.”

“Very glad, indeed, sir.”

“Winter at last, Claude, in real earnest. Why, we are snowed up already, and it’s coming down thicker than ever, and blowing with a vengeance. We shall be prisoners for a week at least.”

“I hope we are well provisioned, sir.”

“I hope so, Claude, for nobody can get to us any more than we can get to them.”

“It’s a regular siege, uncle.”

“We shall need strategy, my boy, we shall need strategy. We shall be put to our mettle. After lunch you and I had better lend them a hand in shovelling away the snow.”

“With all my heart, uncle. We can’t

tamely sit down and consent to be snowed up. We must fight the unfriendly elements."

"Quite right, my boy ; never be snowed up when a shovel or any other friendly means will help you to pitch aside the cold obstructive hindrances of your natural liberty. Go through life, Claude, with that manly resolution."

"I will, sir ; I like the point of your moral."

"Why, papa," exclaimed Mary, "you are quite profound—you talk like a sage, and in parables, too."

Mr. Threlfall was flattered by this compliment from his daughter, and, with manifest pride of feeling, continued his parable.

"You see, Claude, in a case like this, when you are snowed up, hedged in, regularly set upon, you mustn't be vanquished. You must fight your way stoutly ; put a strong, steady shoulder to your task. And you mustn't be over nice about a soil or two, and a few scratches and bruises, and perhaps deeper

wounds. You can't contend with great obstacles on any other conditions. Real hard work dirties the hands and makes the back and bones ache. Never mind the dirt, and salve and soothing will soon heal all damages."

Claude listened very complacently to the sage moralising of his uncle, whose face was glowing with self-approval at the brilliancy of his own wisdom and the admirable pertinency of his figurative speech, and when he paused, his nephew shouted—

"Hear! hear! Go on, sir; you are quite an orator."

"I think, uncle," struck in Julia, like a splash of cold water on the orator's self-complacency, "your remarks need some little qualification. Your similes are open to some misconstruction and even perversion. I don't quite like your allusion to dirty hands and bruises, and that sort of thing."

"Why, my dear, it's quite natural that you, as a young lady, shouldn't like dirt and bruises, but men, you see, mustn't mind these

things. There's a good deal of dirty work to be done in this hard-working world. The most delicate hands must be defiled. That beautifully polished brooch in your bosom was not made with clean hands. The diamond is not cut and set without defilement; and all this pure white snow, what will it come to but slush and mire and filthy mud? It's all in the necessary nature of things, my dear. But come, Claude, if you're ready we had better turn to at our wet dirty work, to make everything clean and comfortable."

Mary smiled, as Claude and her father rose to quit the room, and Julia did not detain her uncle with any reply, but she did not seem at all convinced or satisfied with the answer she had received, notwithstanding Mr. Threlfall looked so triumphant with the abundance of his illustrations and the completeness of his rhetorical victory.

Still the snow fell, and the wind was blowing in wild fitful gusts, giving the five men who composed the working part of the garri-

son plenty to do. Claude and his uncle, like the others, were soon enveloped in ever thickening layers of fleecy whiteness; but both laughed and joked at their work, and were wonderfully cheerful.

“Shovel away, Claude, never be snowed up, my boy; pitch it right and left; we must have a clear path.”

Claude did as he was bidden, and accidentally pitched a heavy shovelfull of snow against his uncle's legs.

“Gently, Claude; don't knock your old uncle over, my boy.”

“Beg pardon, uncle; not if I can help it, but you were just in my way then.”

“I'll get out of your way, my boy.”

“Thank you, uncle,” and Claude, as he said this, felt how doubly and trebly thankful he should be to his old uncle if he would but get out of his way in the onward course of his one great ambition in life.

CHAPTER V.

UNCLE THRELFALL CONTINUES HIS PARABLE, AND
IS QUITE ENTERTAINING.

ALTHOUGH the inconveniences of being snowed up are frequently considerable, and particularly in remote country localities, like that of Walmer Grange, yet Claude quite enjoyed the novelty. There were intellectual and moral advantages in this particular snowing up, afforded by Mr. Threlfall's conversation, which was always very suggestive to his nephew, and took a directly educational and admonitory turn, for the special behoof of that

young gentleman, who was just setting out in life. The only person who did not seem to admire or enjoy his loquacious wisdom was his niece, Julia, who would frequently interrupt the flow of his discourse with suggestions that such and such remarks had more than one bearing, and were capable of interpretations which the speaker did not at all contemplate, or appear to be in the least aware of ; but Julia was behind the domestic scenes, and Mr. Threlfall was not, but always in the forefront, and in his proper place as head of the family. All his interferences with the management in this family drama, like the part he sustained in it, were blundering and unfortunate ; and not till the play was fully acted out and the curtain was about to fall, was he at all aware that he had been sustaining a distinguished *rôle* in a comedy of errors. You had only to look at him, and listen to his after-dinner talk for about ten minutes, to be convinced that he was just the man to make the most egregious blunders in his capacity

of chairman of a domestic establishment. He had not the least insight into character, and had no faculty for the appreciation of personal tastes, inclinations, and aptitudes, which most educators and directors of the young consider to be elements of reflection and calculation in the exercise of their functions.

As head of his house, he held his authority to be absolute, and considered it his special function to decide the course and future of all his dependants. Without a word of conversation with his nephew, or raising any question with himself about taste and fitness, he decided he should be a lawyer because it was a respectable profession, and a road to preferment. It may serve to illustrate this singular defect in his mind that he never had a sharp word for his coachman but on one point. The man persisted in placing the bay mare on the right side of the pole, because she always drew better in that position, and was more manageable. The reason assigned was quite sufficient to decide Mr. Threlfall to

have her harnessed and put on the left side. He could not endure strong special tastes and biases, either in men or brutes. He did not buy that mare to run only on one side of his carriage, and he was not going to allow it. The horses consequently had to frequently change places at the door, and just as the ladies were about to step into the carriage for their morning drive. Every kind of predilection was a crotchet, and a crotchet was a mere idle perversity and whim, which he did not choose to indulge. Ever since the miserable failure in life of his poor brother William he had set his face like a flint against crotchets. It never entered his head that his hostility to crotchets was also itself a crotchet.

The deficiencies of his education were so irreparable that, although he indulged much in his favourite reading of biography, he never learnt the lessons of wisdom which that study, as much as any other, is calculated to afford. He had read over and over again the lives of men whose idiosyncrasies had asserted them-

selves in spite of blind opposition, and unfavourable circumstances, and had admired their perseverance and eventual triumph over all obstacles ; but then he could only take in a part of the lesson, and saw only the energy and success which exclusively interested him. He read the lives of these successful men with just one eye, and that steadily fixed on their indomitable purpose and eventual success. It may seem a strange defect in Mr. Threlfall, but he is not the only man in the world who reads with one eye shut, and it was his misfortune rather than his fault that his one open eye was not of Cyclopean proportions and keenness of vision.

No one who looked into Uncle Threlfall's expansive, clean shaven face, beaming with the complacency of his thoroughly comfortable circumstances, and bland to the very extreme of gentleness, softness and affability, would doubt for a moment that he was one of the kindest men living. He was tenderness itself towards his daughter and niece, and in-

dulged them with every wish. They never needed to ask him for money, for he made them a most liberal allowance, which he paid with a punctuality, and always in a couple of cheques on a bank at Dover, as if he were paying wages in his counting house. The dear girls should never want for anything while he was living, and when he was dead they should have their own ample fortune placed in their own hands to do what they liked with. He had passed through life with so much easy success, and surrounded by so many agreeable circumstances, that he saw only the best and most pleasant side of human nature, and had an unbounded confidence in the natural goodness and integrity of the human heart. Mr. Threlfall believed in everybody with a most amazing faith, and had not the least particle of suspicion in his generous composition.

During dinner that day he had made two or three attempts to take up his parable, but it was not remarkable for any higher flights

of moral wisdom ; indeed, once he fairly broke down in the unusual effort, with him, of straining after tropes and metaphors. What he did say, however, was in close analogical and logical consistency with what he had previously said in a more impromptu and eloquent manner. One conclusion was clear enough, and that was that dirt must be contracted in the labour of life, and was a natural necessity. Indeed, he talked so much about dirt and its unavoidable discomfort, that any listener would have thought that Mr. Threlfall quite delighted in dirt, and considered it the *summum bonum* of human existence. Probably not only the poverty of poetic thought and language, but also his recent laborious experiences with shovel and broom among the snow-drifts, had something to do with this repetitious talk of his, and constantly revolving about this dirty idea. Claude seemed quite to enjoy the lively, but somewhat embarrassed, talkativeness of his uncle ; Mary was amused,

and exchanged wicked glances with her cousin, and Julia looked as if she were quite bored and vexed. But the wine was no sooner on the table, and the first glass of favourite port swallowed, than Uncle Threlfall was in a more chatty mood than ever.

“ Claude, my boy,” he exclaimed, with fresh animation, “ I almost envy you your brilliant prospects in life. I should like to have been a barrister myself. I flatter myself I could have talked to some purpose.”

“ Not a doubt of it, sir,” replied the nephew, with a secret chuckle at his uncle’s vanity. “ Did you ever indicate in your youthful days a talent for speaking, uncle ?”

“ I can’t remember ; perhaps I did.”

“ A pity, if it were so, sir, that nobody discerned your native talent and encouraged you to cultivate it.”

“ Ah ! no, Claude, there you’re wrong. Better as it is, very much better as it is. I have been successful in the path chosen for

me. You see as a merchant I have succeeded; as a barrister I might not, I might have broken down at the Bar."

"But you might not, sir."

"True, I might not; but you see there is some possibility that I might. There's been no doubt about the path I've followed, and therefore it is quite clear that it was the right thing to put me into the counting-house."

"What's your opinion of the Bar as a profession, uncle?"

"A highly respectable profession, Claude, and one that opens the way to wealth, consideration, and dignity."

"Well, yes, I suppose it is what you say; but do you really think it a respectable profession, uncle?"

"Respectable! of course, highly respectable. Barristers are learned men, and among the first gentlemen of the land."

"I often think," rejoined Claude, "that it's a very curious, ticklish sort of profession."

“Curious ! ticklish ! What do you mean, boy ?”

“Well, you see, uncle, a barrister must be quite different from the generality of men ; a man, as we say at Cambridge, *sui generis*.”

“Explain yourself, Claude, and don’t talk Greek.”

“It was a Latin phrase, sir, that I used.”

“Well, don’t talk Latin, neither ; talk English, and I shall know what you mean.”

“What I mean is this, uncle ; a barrister is a man of brains and tongue, and with an eye always squinting at fees ; he must have no conscience. Now, a man without a conscience may be a very comfortable sort of person in his way, but he can have no moral discernment, and must be singularly deficient of what is generally considered necessary among men—a high moral character. Indeed, I don’t know how he can be said to have any character at all.”

“Your love of obscure things seems to me

to muddle your head, Claude. What you have now said sounds in my ear as absurd as that geometrical nonsense we were laughing over the other night."

"Not at all, uncle; now, isn't it so? Look here, now; anybody may hire a barrister, mayn't he?"

"If he can pay him his fees."

"Precisely. And if so, then a barrister is ready to let himself out, like a carriage for common hire, to anybody."

"That's his business, or rather his profession; and every man, barrister or no barrister, is ready for business."

"But barristers are only engaged in matters of dispute between litigants; both of whom can't be right; one must be wrong; yet, whichever of the two first retains him with a fee, he acknowledges as his client, and makes his case his own."

"Just so; quite proper, Claude."

"Well, I'm not quite sure that I see it in that light, uncle. About the propriety of the

thing I'm a little, just a little, you see, in doubt. However, not to discuss that point, it proves what I have said, that a barrister must be a man without a conscience."

"Perfect nonsense, Claude, there's no such thing possible as a man without a conscience. Why he's born with a conscience, just as he's born with a head and legs, and all the rest of his proper manhood."

"So I think, uncle ; I quite agree with you. But what, then, does he do with his conscience?"

Mr. Threlfall looked somewhat puzzled by this question, and, after helping himself to a glass of port, pushed the bottle to his nephew. He always drank rather freely of his favourite vintage, and had emptied his glass before he replied.

"I tell you what it is, Claude, you are too fond of difficult questions. I can't say that I am quite so much in love with difficulties as you are. At all events, my boy, you'll be able to answer your own questions one of these

days very satisfactorily, for you will be a barrister yourself."

"You can't be surprised, uncle," said Claude, propitiatingly, "that I now and then think about the profession for which you have destined me."

"Certainly not, my dear boy; you can't think too much about what you wish to succeed in."

"Well, then, uncle, just gratify me with the light of your wisdom on one or two questions which necessarily interest me."

Mr. Threlfall was at once propitiated by this appeal to his superior wisdom, and very affably expressed his readiness to continue the conversation.

"I was saying uncle, that a barrister is ready, on the payment of his retaining fee, for either side of a question in litigation. Now, suppose he happens to have taken not merely the weaker, but the wrong side, will he, as soon as he discovers it, throw up his brief?"

“To be sure not, Claude, for how then could the litigation go on?”

“Then he will defend his client, and, by all the arts of his legal cunning, and the aids of his legal lore, labour to prove the right man wrong and the wrong man right.”

“Exactly so; he will say all that can be said in defence of his client.”

“And a good deal that ought not to be said too, I fancy.”

“But then, you see, Claude, there’s the counsel on the other side, the right side, and he’ll make all clear and straight again.”

“But where’s the conscience all this time of the counsel on the wrong side? Why, uncle, he must be lying all through like a trooper; putting a false appearance and making false constructions on what he knows to be as rotten as this medlar,” at the same time putting the fruit into his mouth.

“Rotten things are often eaten, Claude, as you have just shown us. You eat your game and your cheese, as well as your

medlars, rotten, and enjoy them too, eh?" and Mr. Threlfall chuckled at his illustrations, and filled his glass again, as though to drink a compliment to his own superlative wisdom.

Claude, however, returned to the charge with the question—

"Do you think, uncle, counsel enjoys the rottenness of his case?"

"Not unlikely, my boy; it sharpens his wits, and if he wins, he gets immense credit for his professional skill."

"But what will his conscience say to him in that event? I forget, though, he cannot, surely, have a conscience in the matter."

"Now, Claude," said Mr. Threlfall, with the air of a man who all at once sees through a brick wall, "I will answer your question. A barrister can take up another man's case, but he cannot appropriate another man's conscience. The conscience necessarily remains with his client; that's not transferable—of course not."

“Then the barrister doesn’t want a conscience at all in the case, uncle.”

“To be sure not, my boy.”

“I’m afraid, uncle, I shall not be able to lay my conscience aside so easily when I enter on my professional career.”

“It will come easily enough, Claude, never fear, in the course of your professional training.”

“The bar, as I said, uncle, is a ticklish profession; respectable enough, no doubt, but liable to dabble in dirt.”

“Ah! dirt; there it is again,” exclaimed Mr. Threlfall, with a smile of gratified reminiscence; “as I have said more than once to-day, dirt is inevitable; we can’t get away from dirt; it’s a law of nature is dirt, Claude, a law of nature, my boy. Nature herself is often very dirty, as we proved this morning, and shall see when this snow begins to melt. But I’m rather tired, Claude, with that shovelling work, and will take a nap before tea.”

Claude withdrew with Mary and Julia to the drawing room, and left uncle Threlfall to repose awhile after the manual and intellectual fatigues he had undergone.

Mary and Claude were in the mood to enjoy a hearty laugh over the simplicity of the moralizing with which they had been entertained, but Julia was determined to have her opportunity now, and began by saying that she had been quite shocked at Claude for drawing on his uncle to talk in the way he had done.

“I think uncle never appeared to greater advantage than he has to-day, Julie.”

“Oh! fie, Claude!”

“Really Julie,” said Mary, “I never heard papa so eloquent.”

“But you do not mean to say, Mary, that you think all that talk about dirt and rottenness edifying?”

“Upon my life I do,” answered Claude. “Uncle talked like a sensible, practical man, who knows something of the world.”

“ Well, Claude, if you are speaking seriously, I can only say that you have one qualification for a barrister—you can play fast and loose with your conscience.”

“ Oh ! oh ! that’s plain speaking, Julie.”

“ Of course it is ; and I’ll be a little plainer, Claude. You took a pleasure in uncle’s conversation because it accorded with your own disposition and projects, and afforded something like a sanction to your own conduct. I do wish you’d be straightforward, Claude. You really are a very crooked fellow.”

“ Crooked, by Jove ! why, I’m as straight as an arrow.”

“ And like an arrow,” added Mary, laughing, “ can fly straight to your mark, Claude. You’re a wicked fellow ; but somehow I do like a wicked fellow. I think if you were as good and proper as Hawley Paget I shouldn’t like you half so well.”

“ Polly, I’m more than half vexed with you,” returned Julia, “ you make Claude worse than he is.”

“ I beg pardon, Julie, for speaking so rudely of Hawley. Indeed I do like Hawley, but then, you see, Hawley is so very proper, and all that sort of thing. Don't you think, now, if he had a little of Claude's fun he would be nicer.”

“ Well, fun, yes ; but Claude is something more than funny. I want him to be open and straightforward with uncle.”

“ Now, Julie, you know as well as I that uncle won't let me be above-board with him. Didn't I try to lead the conversation so that uncle might see how absurd it is to thwart the natural inclinations and particular abilities of people ? I hoped to draw him on to confess that if I had the stuff of an artist in me Nature pointed out that as my proper profession. But you know uncle don't see it, or won't see it, or can't see it. Come now, let's have no more preaching, Julie. What's that about Hawley Paget ? Do you often see him ?”

“ Oh ! we've seen a good deal of that young

gentleman, I can tell you, Claude," said Mary, with one of her sly, expressive looks. "Mr. Hawley Paget's name is held in high respect here, and not only by papa."

"Oh! oh! that's news," said Claude.

"Polly, what rubbish you are telling Claude," said Julia, blushing.

"Well, Julie, Mr. Hawley Paget is a very nice young man, and very good looking, too; and, talking of conscience, I never met with such a conscientious person. Why, I don't believe he would speak or act a fib as small as a filbert, not even to save his life."

"By Jove! Polly, he must be one of Hamlet's paragon of animals. *Mens sibi conscia recti*. He ought to stick those initials at the end of his name—M.R.C.S., a slight transposition, 'Member of the Royal College of—' well, 'Saints;' that will do."

Julia did not seem at all pleased at the jocularities of her brother, and said nothing.

"No offence, Julie dear. Forgive me, won't you? I wish I belonged to that Col-

lege ; seriously, I do. But this is news ; are you engaged to Hawley, Julie ?”

“ Engaged, Claude ! What a question ! but will you please to ring the bell ? Thomas had better tell uncle that tea’s ready.”

CHAPTER VI.

MR. HAWLEY PAGET IS HONOURABLY ACQUITTED.

It's an ill wind that blows nobody good. Claude Threlfall was not at all angry with the fierce north-wester that still continued blowing, and bringing on its wild whistling wings its inexhaustible burden. It had never ceased snowing since the morning after Christmas day, and, at every occasional subsidence of the fierce blasts, down it came in dense straight lines, like small ostrich feathers, falling with an energy as if gravitation had trebled its force. Rubbing his hands, as he

looked out on the wintry scene, less for warmth than for the expression of his most perfect satisfaction, Claude congratulated himself on the eminently agreeable circumstances of his brief holiday at the Grange.

“I sha’n’t see Hawley Paget this Christmas, that’s clear. So, he’s head over ears in love with my sister Julie. By Jove! he would have been here before this, but for this glorious weather. Snowed up, like all the rest of us. Not even love, swift and sure-footed, can make its way from Dover to Walmer. Everything and everybody effectually stopped and shut up, for some days to come! The first chance of flight and I’m off. Dear old uncle, how he’ll applaud my professional zeal! Yes, I’ll be off to Dover, and on the rails, before that pink Paget is out of the blankets some morning. He and I mustn’t meet, that’s plain; the fellow will be horribly in my way in town. No, Hawley; I must postpone the pleasure of your acquaintance for some time to come. I wish you much

success, my friend, in your conscientious profession ; and if Julie likes you, well, I wish you both much matrimonial happiness. You'll suit each other to a T. If your conscience ever gives you any trouble, by being absent at a critical moment, Julie's will help you out with this necessary commodity. You two will never be hard up for conscience. Between you both, you can spare your poor destitute brother a small quantity now and then. By Jove ! this is lucky ; snow away ! Whew ! whistle away old Boreas ! after him Zephyrus ! There's a whizz ! keep it up ! The love of Cupid couldn't face that for all the Psyches in creation. Paget, my boy, your apology is ample ! Not a word, sir—not one single word in excuse for your absence ; you are honourably acquitted. Julie makes full allowance for you, and so do I. By-the-bye, I mustn't forget you old Blackstone, before I go downstairs," and he opened the volume, and moved on one of the blue silk ribbons to within thirty pages of the end. " Now, if my

good old uncle has been curious to see every day how much progress I have made, he'll see that I've gone pretty fast these last few days, through you, old fellow. I really don't care a fig for you, Sir William; but you have done me a good turn this vacation, and I am greatly obliged to you. I like men with a conscience, Sir William, and men of your profession have none."

Claude was thus engaged, in anticipation of the summons to lunch, when Mary, without knocking, opened the door—for he had forgotten to lock it after she had left him nearly two hours before—and said that Thomas had just told them that a gentleman the day before had been picked up insensible in a snowdrift, and that he had been taken to the Drum, at Walmer.

"It appears they don't know at the inn who the gentleman is; but he was found on the Dover road, with a small portmanteau beside him."

"What a fool, Polly, to turn out such

weather as this," replied Claude; "is the poor fellow dead?"

"No; fortunately, he was found in time. A hot water bath brought him to, and he's now in bed there, and I suppose very ill. I wonder who it is, Claude?"

"Who could be coming over to Walmer in this weather?"

"Do you think it's Hawley? I almost fear it is. He's not been able to come for so many days; and he would be sure to come to see Julie, and, of course, he would like to know you."

"By Jove! Polly, not at all unlikely! What on earth shall we do?"

"I think we ought to make inquiry at the Drum."

"Make inquiry! Who, in the name of common humanity, can be turned out on a couple of miles walk through these Arctic regions just to make inquiry?"

"Well, all I have to say is, that Julie is so alarmed, and thinks it very likely that the

gentleman is Hawley. But, there's the gong. Come downstairs and talk about the matter there."

Julia was talking with her uncle as they entered the room, and her anxious looks betrayed her fears that the unfortunate gentleman was no other than her lover.

"You fear it's Hawley, Julie, I see. You shall soon be satisfied, for I will go over to the Drum immediately after lunch. Cheer up, Julie; if it is he, he's out of danger, you know."

"Oh! Claude, how can you go?" said Julia, but evidently much relieved at the generous offer of her brother.

"It's only a mile across, and I know the country pretty well."

"But it's very dangerous, Claude," expostulated Mary; "and I shall be so anxious till you come back."

"Not like a walk from Dover, Polly. I'll go; there's no danger."

“Have the horse, Claude,” said Julia.

“Oh, no, thank you; I shall manage it better on foot.”

Claude quickly despatched his lunch, and wrapping himself well up, and taking his stout oaken stick, he was soon on his way to the inn.

Never in his life did Claude remember such a winter as this. True, he knew the country; but the snow was falling in such large flakes, and with such rapidity and density, and every now and then such fierce gusts of wind assailed him, and drove the snow in his face and eyes, that he could see little more of the country than if he were enveloped in a fog. And what he could see of it, was so strange in its aspect, that he had the greatest difficulty to keep the familiar high road. More than once he had wandered from his path, and had to retrace his way by his own solitary footmarks, which were very soon effaced. A drift passed clean over a low hedge, up

which he began to ascend, till he discovered the deception by sinking deeper in the snow.

“There’s a lie for you,” he said, as he looked back on the deceiving drifts, “a white lie, I grant, but as big a lie as any other, never mind what colour. Whew! my eye, what a wind!” and he turned his back to it as it swept by him with a rush and a whistle that ended in a long cadence of a shrill scream, as if of some miserable creature in distress. “There’s a house at last, and the inn must be just round that corner. By Jove! and I shall have to see Hawley after all, if this unfortunate fellow is my prospective brother-in-law. Confoundedly awkward! This excursion of mine is so worthy of the Good Samaritan, that my poor brother will be melted with grateful emotion, and take me to his bosom from this day forward! But perhaps it’s not Hawley, after all. Hold! enough!” he shouted, as he again faced about to receive another blast from the pitiless storm. “Now

just shut up. One may have too much of a good thing." He was turning the corner of a house close to the wall, and was shut in by some pailings and a small gate fixed fast, and all but buried in the snow. He saw that he had got by the back way into a cottager's garden, but he had accidentally cut off a circuitous part of his road, and there, to his joy, was the Drum, with its little sign hanging out, like a flying target, which the storm was pelting and beating backwards and forwards on its hinges, to its own individual peril, and that of any hapless being who might venture beneath.

"Why, bless my soul, Mr. Threlfall, and is that you, sir? Such a day as this, too! You've come to see the poor gentleman, in course." This was said by the landlady of the Drum, as, jumping up behind the counter of her bar, where she had been fast asleep, she opened her wondering eyes on an unlooked for visitor. "Mr. Paget, I'm happy to say, sir, is going on very well."

So it was Hawley Paget after all.

“The poor young gentleman,” continued the landlady, “has been within half-an-inch of his grave, sir. Just discovered in the very nick o’ time, sir. Another five minutes, probably, and he’d a’ been a dead man, not a doubt on it; but he was tired with his frightful long walk from Dover, and set hisself down. People ought never to sit ’emself down in a snow-storm when they’re tired, Mr. Threlfall. Better keep on their legs and go on, sir. And to think, now, how contrairy things is in this world! for it happened only just half-a-mile o’ your house, where he was a-going to. What a shock it would a’ been to you all at the Grange, sir, if the poor young gentleman had perished, almost, as one may say, just under the very winders.”

“It was a narrow escape,” replied Claude, “within an inch of his life, eh!”

“Half-a-inch, sir, not a bit more, I’ll be bound. Why, sir, when farmer Groves’ cart managed at last to reach our door with the

poor young gentleman we all thought he was dead. But the bath brought him round at last. We had to make it very hot, I can tell you, for it almost scalded my elbow when I tried its temper'ture. But thank goodness, sir, he's a doing nicely now. He'll have to be kept in bed though, the doctor says, for two or three days, it's been such a shock, you see, sir, to his constitution. You'll take a glass o' something, of course, sir ; something hot, afore you go up stairs to see your friend Mr. Paget."

Claude declined the brandy, and accepted a glass of peppermint cordial.

" I'll just go quietly up stairs, sir, and see if Mr. Paget is able to see you."

The landlady returned to say that the young gentleman was in a nice sound sleep, and it would be a pity to wake him.

" But you'll like just to have a peep at him and see how comfortable he is. We sha'n't wake him. Will you come up stairs, sir ?"

Claude followed the landlady, and went just inside the door. There lay Hawley Paget in

the enjoyment of sound repose, breathing quietly, and evidently, as the landlady had said, doing well.

“We shall take great care of him, Mr. Threlfall; have no fears on that score, till he’s well enough to get out again and come to you, which won’t be for the next three days for certain, to say nothing about the weather, which in course has a voice in the matter. Your family doctor, Mr. Beesley’s attending on him, so he can’t be in better hands. My duty to your uncle, if you please, sir, and the young ladies. All quite well I hope, sir.”

Claude thanked the landlady for her excellent attentions to his friend, and again turned back on his way home. Thanks to the peppermint cordial and the warmer cordial that he had accomplished his heroic and benevolent mission without a wide awake interview with his friend and future brother-in-law, Claude waded on through the deep snow with a cheerful heart and good will. He climbed over the cottage palings, and trespassed again

through the cottager's back garden, but when he had lost sight of this friendly landmark, and hoped to see some traces of his own foot-marks, they were all, to his disappointment, covered up, and he had to make his way as well as he could.

More than once he was again out of his road, and abused Dame Nature lustily for her wilful departure from truth. That nature herself told lies he was very emphatically convinced by many mishaps on this homeward journey. But somehow, notwithstanding his lavish abuse of her deceptive conduct, he laughed at his own disasters, and, when he had surmounted his difficulties, looked as if he was winking at Dame Nature, and on most excellent terms with her. At length he reached home, and soon relieved every one of their special anxieties. Julie shed a few tears at first, but Claude gave her such comforting assurances that Hawley was now doing well, and would soon be all right, that she dried her tears, and began to be interested in the

story of her brother's adventures, the dangers of which were rather increased than diminished by his exaggerated description.

At dinner that day, for which Claude had an excellent appetite, and was in equally excellent spirits, he drew his uncle into a lively conversation on the morality of lying, pointing out the notorious delinquencies of Dame Nature, and the practical jokes she played in a snow storm. He became very deep and casuistical as he proceeded in the discussion of the subject, much too deep for the plummet of his uncle's understanding to fathom. But, after Mr. Threlfall had taken several glasses of port, he was disposed to agree with his nephew that lying was inevitable, and a little excusable in some conceivable circumstances, and when indulged in, like Nature's, in the perpetration of a few practical jokes, might be innocently laughed at and even commended.

CHAPTER VII.

CLAUDE THRELFALL IS GOING TO BE STRAIGHT-
FORWARD.

THE snow had fallen so uninterruptedly for several days that it was quite a sensational circumstance when the family met at breakfast, on the following morning, with a clear sky overhead, and a bright winter sun shining—everyone was sensible of a perceptible difference in the temperature;—in fact, during the night the wind had veered round directly south. It was comparatively warm, and a rapid thaw was predicted as the consequence

of this delightful change. Everybody was cheerful. The sign of grief had passed from Julia's face ; Mary was just a little depressed because she knew that, now the weather was likely to be open, Claude would be taking his departure for London. Claude hailed the change with rapture, which was only slightly subdued by a glance at Mary, who seemed as if she rebuked his impatience to be gone. But there were reasons why he wished to be away from the Grange now, which had nothing whatever to do with his affection for his cousin Mary. Hawley was not seriously ill ; he merely wanted a little careful nursing, and, as soon as the state of the weather permitted, he would be coming on to the Grange. He had had a most lucky escape from an interview with him, and, as it was necessary to his plans that he should not make his acquaintance yet, he was not going to spoil his future, or, at least, embarrass it, by waiting at Walmer to welcome his brother-in-law ; Hawley would be sure to acquit him of any indifference after he

had heard of his departure. Had he not braved the very elements, which had well nigh done for Hawley, by calling upon him at the earliest possible moment at the Drum? But to remain at home longer was now impossible. This change in the weather would reasonably lead Hawley to expect another visit from him, and it would be a hundred chances to one that he would be so fortunate as to find him again asleep. His course was plain; he would start for London that very day. He could take a small bag, and his luggage could be sent after him a few days hence.

“I’m off to-day, uncle,” he said, as soon as they were seated at breakfast.

“Off to-day, my boy!” replied Mr. Threlfall, with a look of surprise.

“Yes, I’m due, you know, in a day or two at farthest, and it will be prudent to take advantage of this fine day. The snow may return, you know.”

“Very true. I was hardly prepared for such a speedy departure; but be it so, Claude.

I like your zeal, my boy. But have you finished the first volume of Blackstone?"

"Quite done with him, sir. Finished him yesterday morning."

"You shall have the other volumes, my boy."

"Thank you, uncle."

"Yes, they shall be sent up with your luggage. You can't take your luggage to-day."

"No, I can do without it for two or three days."

"Let us know your number in Gray's Inn."

"Oh, I sha'n't live in Chambers, you know, uncle, just yet; it's horribly close, and stuffy, too. One of the suburbs, about a pleasant hour's walk from the Inn, will be the part to live in. I know your strong opinions, uncle, about pure air, and active walking exercise."

"Ah! very true, Claude. Sleep in the fresh air, my boy, and an hour's daily walk to your chambers there and back will keep you

in sound health. I shall hear from you, at least every week, either directly or through Julie and Polly."

"Every week, uncle. If I take my head to London I shall leave my heart at Walmer Grange."

"Well, Claude, my best wishes for your success. If zeal and energy will take you up the ladder of your profession, you'll leave many a round behind you."

"Thank you, sir; I shall do my best to get as high up the ladder as I can."

"I know you will, Claude. When you have packed up all you need to take with you come to me in the library, for just five minutes, alone."

Claude went off to his room, and was followed very quickly by Mary and Julia.

"Now, you know, girls," began Claude, when he had shut the door, "I'm going to be straightforward with you two at all events. You see how the case stands between me and uncle. He don't understand me in the least.

He has destined me for the Bar, and nature has predestined me to be an artist, and I have been compelled to side with nature, and am resolved to be, what alone I am fit for—that is a dabbler in colours. It's no use fighting against nature, and moreover I am not at all in the mood to cross swords with her. I know well enough what risks I run by this decision. Uncle, if he should know what I am about, will cut me off with a shilling, and cut me for ever while he lives. If it ever comes to his ears that I've renounced the Bar there'll be the devil to pay. I'm clean done for, that's certain; I shall be denied my home, and you'll never see me any more. I shall be as good as dead to both of you. Well, now, what I want you both to do is to keep my secret as tight and close as your stay lace, and mind you never read any of my letters to uncle, till you have carefully looked them over yourselves. I shall put, as well as I can, all specially private matters between thickly

marked brackets, but it may happen, you know, in the frankness of correspondence, that some things, either expressed or implied, may slip outside the brackets ; so read my letters carefully, and put your own marks under any ambiguous or suggestive matter, that you do not come out with something which may provoke inquiry and demand explanation. You will both need to be very careful, sensitively watchful, and cunningly ingenious."

"I'll keep the secret, Claude, and be all that you mention, and a good deal more if necessary," replied Mary, promptly.

Julia hesitated in her reply, and assumed one of her gravest looks.

"You don't answer, Julie," said her brother, looking at her with a corresponding seriousness.

"I don't like secrets, Claude," she replied, "and especially a secret of this nature."

"But it can't be helped, Julie ; you know it is unavoidable. I'm irresistibly compelled

to follow where nature leads me. Uncle is fighting against nature in my case, and won't give in."

Julia remained silent, and looked both distressed and perplexed.

"Do you want uncle to turn his back on me, Julie? Do you want him to forbid me his house? Do you want a terrible row between us that will blow up all my prospects for ever?"

"Of course I do not, Claude. You know I love you very dearly, and would do anything in reason and right to serve you, but this systematic deception on your part will make me miserable. You will be deceiving uncle all the while you are away, and we shall be deceiving him under his own roof. Oh! it does seem to me so shocking!"

"Then you won't consent to this secrecy, Julie; you'll split on me, eh?"

This was said with some bitterness and reproach as well as a feeling of disappointment.

"You are angry with me, Claude, and don't

seem to see that you are asking Mary and me to do what will degrade us both in our own estimation."

"Indeed, Julie, I sha'n't feel myself at all degraded," observed Mary. "I can't see what poor Claude is to do, in his terrible dilemma, but keep a secret which papa won't allow him to tell him, except at such dreadful penalties."

"Why can't Claude, Mary, do as uncle wishes him, and study for the Bar? He will have abundance of time and opportunities to indulge his painting taste without making it everything, as if he needed to follow it as a profession."

"I positively hate the Bar, Julie. Besides, you heard what uncle confessed the other day, that a conscience was very inconvenient to a barrister, and that, in short, he could do better without one."

"Oh! Claude," exclaimed Julia, "I am really surprised to hear you quote uncle in such a manner. You know you almost forced

him, by your crooked arguments, to say what he did; and then, you know, too, uncle said it a long while after dinner, when he was a little more excited than usual with his wine."

"Come, come, Julie, that's not at all a complimentary apology for uncle."

"Complimentary or not, Claude, you know as well as I that it is the fact."

"Well, all I have to say is that the conscience view of the matter bothers me a good deal, and I should have thought that you, Julie, would have sympathised with me."

"Oh! Claude, if this matter were not so serious you would force a smile from me."

"Well, now do smile, Julie, and don't look so confoundedly serious. I tell you what now, I'll compromise the matter just for your sake. I'll keep terms at my Inn, eat the dinners, pay the fees, and all that sort of thing, and do everything necessary, which is not much, to put myself in the proper course to be called to the Bar. I'll go in for a barrister, Julie; will that satisfy you?"

“Yes, it will, and I am so glad you have consented. Of course there will be no need to say anything about your painting; we can keep that a secret.”

“You will, Julie?”

“I will.”

“And you’ll not even breathe a word about my favourite amusement to Hawley? You know he’ll be here in a day or two, perhaps to-morrow, for there’s nothing serious the matter with him.”

“No, I’ll not tell Hawley. There is no need to put unpleasant burdens on more shoulders than have need to bear them.”

“Unpleasant burdens, Julie! What is there particularly burdensome or unpleasant in your consenting to keep a little secret of this sort?”

“Well, there, I have promised to keep the secret.”

“Swear!” said Claude, quoting Hamlet, and putting himself into dramatic attitude in the pleasantness of his humour at having over-

come his sister's scruples. "Swear !" he repeated.

"Claude !" shouted a deep, sonorous voice from the bottom of the stairs. All started as if the ghost of the murdered Dane were echoing the imposition of the fearful oath. "Claude !" repeated Mr. Threlfall, "are you coming down. You'll lose your train. It will take you nearly three hours such a day as this to get to Dover."

"All right, uncle, I'll be with you in half a second."

CHAPTER VIII.

CLAUDE IS IMAGINATIVE, BUT NOT AT ALL MORE
LOGICAL.

THE change was indeed wonderful, after such a succession of wild dreary weather with which the old year had taken its farewell, and the new year had been ushered in. Not a cloud this morning hung in the sky. The air was bright, clear, and warm, and the sun lent the charm of his slanting rays to animate the scene. As the day advanced the effects of this change began to be clearly visible. The snow sunk deeper into the bosom of the earth,

which was silently absorbing it underneath, and already, in some places, where, by the force of the wind, it had not been suffered to gather thickly, the points of the grass became visible. From the roof of the house all round the water had begun to fall in quick pattering drops, and now it was streaming from some points, and, where the slopes were more inclined, every now and then huge masses of snow came sliding down and falling with a heavy thud on the ground below. So rapid was the thaw that Mr. Threlfall and his three men were engaged all the morning with their spades in throwing aside the melting masses from the immediate surroundings of the house, to prevent the calamity of being half flooded on the ground floor.

Julia and Mary were busy in making up a few dainties to be despatched to the Drum, and Thomas, when all was ready, was summoned from his work in the snow to carry the little basket, with a letter, and to make particular inquiries about the health of the patient.

Claude was not much thought of in the midst of these engrossing preparations and activities; everybody was too much interested and busy to feel his absence; even Mary, who had shed tears in the pain of separation from her lover and companion, was giving her time and thoughts to Julia, and sharing her solicitude and loving attentions to Hawley's comfort.

Before Thomas returned a messenger had arrived with a letter from Mr. Beesley, the family doctor, conveying the most positive assurances that Mr. Hawley Paget had suffered no serious injury, and that, as he would be quitting his bed in the course of the morning, he should take advantage of the opening weather to bring Mr. Paget with him, on the following morning, in his carriage to the Grange.

Meanwhile Claude trudged on his way, well shod in thick winter boots, his legs protected by black leather gaiters, high above his knees, like military jack boots, and his black leather

bag swung across his shoulder with a strap. He wore a broad-brimmed felt Tyrolese hat, beneath which fell his luxuriant locks of curly brown hair. His general appearance was picturesque, and he looked what he intended to be, a votary of the charming art.

Although the high road from Deal to Dover, which passes through Walmer, is broad and well defined, and the capricious tricks of a snow storm cannot easily obliterate its course, yet the quantity of snow which had fallen, and the slushy state into which it was now setting, made the walk anything but easy and agreeable. By the time he was descending from the Castle heights to the town, Claude was more than half exhausted, and his legs and feet were saturated with wet. He was not at all in the mood for a railway journey, but he went forward to the station, and was not in the least disappointed to be informed that the trains for the last few days had been unable to run in consequence of the line being blocked up in several places. It was expected, how-

ever, that a train would start on the following day.

The Lord Warden was no disagreeable alternative under the circumstances, and thither he directed his way, glad to divest himself of his heavy wet boots, and to change his soaked socks for more comfortable hose. He had dined, and was now enjoying his pipe in the smoking room. There were several gentlemen in the room, some of whom were looking over copies of a local paper, which had just come from the printing office, and had been laid on the tables. He was leaning back on his well-cushioned seat, amusing himself with the clouds of smoke, which he puffed out in dense volumes, and soliloquising on the fantastic shapes and movements which the smoke assumed as it escaped from his pipe bowl.

“There’s a perfect ring,” he said to himself, as a well defined circlet rose steadily upward, curiously revolving in every part on its own axis. “My dear old uncle would just have me as nicely rounded, tight, and com-

pact as that ring. Why, it's as though it had been cast in a mould. But look how restless every part of it is, how it struggles on every side to be free. Bravo! giving in at last; there it goes, bending and involving itself, and breaking away on every side. That's right, assert your liberty! Spread out; that's the way. There's a noble volume out of its tiny dimensions, and now upwards. Yes, that's the course, outwards and upwards into the broad freedom of the welcoming air. Just like life, life as it should be, and in the necessity of nature, must be."

And he puffed a volley after the dissipated smoke ring, as if to cheer it in its bravely asserted liberty.

Claude's reverie was at that moment disturbed by the sudden start of a gentleman in the room, who, with a short, sharp, ejaculatory noise, threw down the paper he was reading and rose to his feet. At this unusual excitement Claude rose too, and looked around to

see the cause, when, to his surprise, he saw Mr. Paget, senior, standing up with a bewildered look, in which alarm was visibly depicted.

“Mr. Paget, sir,” he exclaimed, walking towards him and holding out his hand.

“Hawley! Claude, have you seen my son, Hawley?” responded Mr. Paget, his alarm intensified by meeting Claude in Dover on such a day.

“I have, sir, I came from Walmer this morning, he’s all right.”

“All right! thank God!” and Mr. Paget fell back in his seat, and drew a long inspiration, which he returned with an audible jerking sort of groan, which seemed to relieve him immensely.

“You are excited about something, Mr. Paget.”

“That paper, look at that paper,” pointing at the same time to a paragraph which stated that Mr. Hawley Paget had been picked up in

the snow on the Deal-road, and had been conveyed insensible to the Drum at Walmer. There was not a word more.

“It’s quite true, sir, but they might have added something more. He’s all right now; don’t be alarmed. I went to the Drum and saw him. Beesley is taking care of him, and in a couple of days he will be well enough to remove to my uncle’s.”

“Thank God!” again ejaculated the thankful father.

“It was a narrow escape, indeed; but he must be pretty well himself again by this time.”

“You came over to break the news to me, I suppose, Claude.”

“No, sir, we didn’t think it worth while to alarm you, as fortunately he is all right.”

“You are very good; but those news-mongers! Why, in the name of heaven, do they put such paragraphs in their confounded prints?”

“Whoever brought the news to Dover,

might have troubled himself to get a little more information, sir.”

“He might. But I’ll see the editor, and give him my opinion of his heartless carelessness. My boy you say is all right, Claude?”

“I have seen him myself, sir, and can give you the fullest assurance on that head. The landlady of the Drum had him put immediately into a warm bath, and he soon recovered. I left him in a quiet sleep. They are taking every care of him, and of course they’ll look well after him at the Grange. I shouldn’t be at all surprised if he’s at my uncle’s tomorrow.”

“You have relieved me greatly, Claude. It’s a most fortunate circumstance that I met you here in this casual way. But what are you doing in Dover?”

“I’m on my way to London, but the trains are stopped, and I must stay here till tomorrow.”

“You’ll come to my house for the night.”

“It’s hardly worth while, thank you, as I go off early to-morrow.”

“No, true, besides I must have the horse put to and be off to Walmer.”

“It is really not necessary, Mr. Paget. Hawley, I assure you, is now all right, and the roads are scarcely passable. He will be well looked after by my uncle and all at the Grange. You can go to-morrow, you know, sir, when the roads will be in a better state if this thaw continues.”

Mr. Paget decided on this, and was now more at his ease.

“So you are going to town. Your uncle tells me you have decided on the Bar as your profession.”

“I can’t say exactly that I have decided on that profession for myself, my uncle has decided it for me.”

“A highly respectable profession, Claude; but of course up-hill work. A good many do nothing at it. Connection and interest are everything for a barrister. I may be of some

service to you, and depend on it I will if I can be."

"You are very good, sir."

"Yes, I may be able to do something for you, through my personal connections with a good many capital firms of attorneys. You know Hawley is studying for the Bar. You'll see a good deal of each other in town. Birds of a feather, you know, Claude."

The partial quotation of the familiar adage was of course not remarked on by Claude, though his bland smile and gentle inclination of his head might be taken as a sufficiently approving response. What he had heard of Hawley was quite enough to convince him that their respective feathers were neither of the same structure nor colour, and if the two birds were looked more carefully at by a scientificornithologist they would be authoritatively pronounced of widely different families. Hawley, in his imagination, was a decorous, harmless, well-conducted pigeon, dove, or turtle, and he was sufficiently well acquainted

with himself to know that he did not belong to the group of Columbidae. He himself was no pigeon, of that he was quite sure; he had more of the liberty-loving, soaring ambition of the eagle in him, and, minus the savage, destructive habits of the family, he would prefer to be grouped with the Falconidae.

“Hawley is of the Inner Temple, I believe, Mr. Paget,” thinking with himself, as he so answered his friend, that that particular Inn of Court was a very properly chosen one for young men of Hawley’s safe tendencies.

“He is, and which is to be your Inn?”

“Gray’s.”

“Gray’s! why Gray’s? One of the Temples or Lincoln’s Inn would be better.”

Now the comparative merits and advantages of Inns had never been entertained by Claude for the briefest moment. He had decided on Gray’s, because that Inn was farthest from the Temple, and if it had been at the northern end of that cheerful thorough-

fare known as Gray's Inn Lane and Road he would have liked it all the better, as he had heard and seen quite as much as he wished of Mr. Hawley Paget.

Claude again smiled blandly, and added an outwardly approving bend of his head.

“A man, you know, Claude, may be called, to the Bar without much expenditure of brain energy, but if he wishes to succeed he must work. Lectures are not worth much; I should advise you to attend chambers, and put yourself under the instruction of a man in good practice. It's a curious anomaly that a man may eat his way like some grovelling animal, or a mean grub, into a highly intellectual profession.”

Claude again inclined his head in silence, but Mr. Paget's remarks were suggestive to him. He had made up his mind to eat his way to the Bar as the easier and more agreeable road, and if that was grovelling, it was, at all events, the most accommodating method for him.

“Like ‘a grub,’ ” he repeated to himself. “Not a bad example that.”

Now, Mr. Paget very probably was thinking, when he used this word “grub,” of those hexapod creatures called worms or maggots, but Claude had always associated this word with the aurelia or chrysalis, and he could not help thinking of the beautiful butterfly form which succeeded the “grub’s ” state, and the free, soaring, sunshiny life which followed.

“Yes,” he repeated, “not a bad example ; I intend to be a grub that I may become a butterfly. That’s the constitution and course of nature.”

“Well, Claude,” said Mr. Paget, rising, “success to you in your profession. I must be off home, for if Mrs. Paget should be so unfortunate as to see one of these confounded papers she’ll be in a dreadful state of alarm. I must be gone, but I am heartily glad to have met you in this fortunate way. Mind, if the train can’t start to-morrow, you come

on to us. We shall be glad to have you for a day or two. Good-bye."

They shook hands and parted.

Claude filled his pipe again, and watched the involutions and evolutions of the ascending smoke as he lay almost at full length on his couch. He fancied he saw all sorts of imaginary forms, pigeons, eagles, grubs, and butterflies, in the fantastic gyrations of the vapour he poured forth, and was soon in a profound ornithological and entomological reverie.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. HAWLEY PAGET AT THE GRANGE.

THE thaw had set in with as much energy and persistence as the snow had previously descended, and was rapidly dissolving it all over the face of the country. It did not intermit or slacken during the night, and by the following morning all the roads were open to the ordinary traffic, though heavy with the remains of the half-melted snow, and saturated with the moisture they were continually absorbing. Hawley Paget arrived at the Grange early,

along with Mr. Beesley, and was followed not long after by his anxious father. As Claude had said, he was all right, and there was no further anxiety on his account. Of course Julia expostulated very tenderly with him on his adventurous expedition in such weather, and Paget was too conscientious to allow her to think that it was wholly or chiefly for the pleasure of seeing her that he had hazarded the venture.

“I very much wished,” he said, “to have the pleasure of making your brother’s acquaintance, Julia. When we last met you said that you did not think it probable he would remain at home much beyond a week, and the week is more than expired.”

“After all you have gone through, Hawley, for the sake of seeing Claude,” replied Julia, “I wish he had remained at home a day or two longer.”

“I wish he had,” added Mary, “there was surely no need to be off in such a frisk. I am glad, Mr. Paget, you saw him at Dover,

for I was very anxious about him starting off while the snow was so deep.”

“Claude wants to be at work, Polly,” observed her father. “I should have been glad to have had him with us a few days longer, but I thought it better not to check his honourable ardour. He has taken to his profession, Paget,” turning towards his friend, “in earnest. We did right to decide on the Bar for him.”

“He’s a good deal altered, Threlfall,” returned that gentleman, “since I last saw him. I hardly knew him when he first accosted me in the hotel, and if I had not heard his voice, I don’t think I should have recognized him.”

“Ah, no! he wears, you mean, such a lot of hair on his head and chin. He ought to cut his hair shorter and shave. I don’t like so much hair; it looks like—”

Mr. Threlfall was going to say that his nephew affected too much, for his taste, the facial style of an artist, but he checked himself as if any allusion to gentlemen of that

profession in connection with Claude was injudicious, even in his absence.

“He has grown very like his father,” said Mr. Paget, interrupting Mr. Threlfall, and supposing him to allude to that deceased gentlemen.

“Too much like him to please me,” replied Mr. Threlfall. “It’s his long hair, and mustaches and beard. You must get him to shave, Hawley, like yourself, and cut off those curls of his. He can’t wear all that hair with his wig.”

“Well, I should think not sir,” said Hawley, “it scarcely accords with professional etiquette. It might do for some men—an artist for example—who likes everything natural better than artificial. I’m half inclined to think that artists have a good deal of affectation, and are somewhat vain of their personal appearance, Mr. Threlfall.”

Mr. Threlfall winced at this mention of an artist, and Claude’s comparison to one, even externally.

“Of course it is not etiquette, Hawley. You are older than he, and I hope you’ll use the liberty of your friendship with him to induce him to conform to the usages of his profession in this respect. You’ll greatly oblige me when you meet in town to say that I very much wish him to do so. Be frank and round with him. Tell him it won’t do; he’ll injure his professional prospects. Fancy him in his legal wig! Ridiculous, Hawley, absolutely ridiculous!”

Hawley Paget promised to use the privileges of friendship, and to be frank and round with the erratic Claude.

Mr. Threlfall knew that he had an excellent ally in the person of his young friend, who was not only very frank, but extremely upright and conscientious. A promise with Mr. Hawley Paget was as sacred as an oath, and, therefore, Claude would be sure to have his uncle’s message, and the benefit of Hawley’s personal advice on the subject, so soon as he

had the honour of forming the acquaintance of that young gentleman.

Claude, as we have seen, had only seen Mr. Hawley Paget in the blankets, and the sweet serenity of his slumbers; but if he had seen him awake and dressed, the very look of that exact young gentleman would have sufficed him before he opened his lips. He would have forsworn him on the spot and for ever, as his intimate personal friend and counsellor.

Hawley never strayed outside the pale of the strictest propriety, either morally or vestmentally. He was rather tall and slim, very upright in his outer as well as his inner man; fair, his light hair rather closely cut and carefully dressed, his face as close shaven and clean as a woman's, with the exception of a very moderate pair of light brown whiskers, which were brushed carefully forward. He dressed always in black, somewhat clerical in cut, especially in the length of the skirts of his surtout, and was never known to appear

in light trousers, not even in the hottest weather and the height of summer. He spoke with cultivated ease, but very leisurely, as if weighing the moral worth of his words as they came to his lips. He was not fluent, though he did not lack words for the suitable expression of his thoughts and feelings ; he a little hesitated in his utterance now and then, as if he were sitting in solemn judgment over his thoughts before he allowed them the incarnation of speech. People instinctively felt in conversation with him that he said what he meant, and meant what he said, and hence all his acquaintances held him in the greatest respect. Mr. Hawley Paget would probably become a distinguished and successful man in his profession as a barrister, but he could hardly ever be an orator, for he was much too conscientious for those impassioned flights of rhetoric which sparkle before and dazzle the bewildered understandings of men, and rattle in kettle-drum fashion on the strained tympanums of the popular ears. He would as

soon pick a man's pocket as hood-wink his understanding by anything merely *ad captandum*. Mr. Hawley Paget was, in short, a highly cultivated, equably serene, scrupulously conscientious, and eminently respectable gentleman.

Such a man can, of course, fall in love with a young lady of kindred principles and tastes, and in falling in love with Julia Threlfall, he had met with one who was in some, and the most important, respects the counterpart and resemblance of himself.

Strictly speaking, he did not, as the phrase is, fall in love at all. Mr. Hawley Paget never fell anywhere or at any time, except in such an unavoidable case as a snow storm, and then, if the fact could have been known, it would have been found that he had not fallen, but quietly and decorously sunk down into his treacherous slumbers.

No, he did not fall in love with Julia, but walked uprightly and deliberately into the blissful condition of acceptance, with which

that young lady had favourably entertained his polite advances. He had candidly avowed, not his passion, but his sentiments, with regard to her, and, when her approval was distinctly signified, he had sealed the contract, as all lovers do, with a kiss. But it was not a kiss of rapture, as though he had lost his head with his heart. There was nothing ecstatic, sudden, and violent, in Mr. Hawley's osculatory action. Julia knew the kiss was coming, and had ample time to dispose herself for its arrival, for it came, as everything else came from him, calmly, and in carefully measured progress, and reposed on the cheek with a gentleness and delicacy that scarcely left an impression. But that kiss on the right cheek was quite as genuine as many that are more boisterous and prolonged full on the lips of ladies, and was a seal of affection that was meant to be as binding as a legal document. Mr. Hawley Paget loved as nature and his special culture enabled him to love, and, if it was methodical, it was certainly not a love

of which he had any moral reason to be ashamed.

The endearments of his intercourse with Julia never went beyond an occasional kiss, at considerably long intervals for lovers of the ordinary type, and the gentle and tender modulations of his voice when addressing her. He never indulged in the common-place epithets of pet, chick, darling, *et hoc omne genus*. "Light of my eyes," "divinity of my heart's worship," "angel of my soul's adoration," "sole reason of my existence," and flights of this rapturous sort were much too impassioned and extravagant for his innate sense of fitness, sobriety, and respectability. "Dear" and "love" were the extreme of his amorous allowances, and the only variations from the more uniform address of her Christian name, which was always as it had been baptismally given to her, Julia—never in one single instance familiarly Julie.

Mr. Hawley Paget was certainly a very great contrast to Mr. Claude Threlfall, and

their differences were not merely superficial and tegumentary. Relations they might become, for that matter was rather in Miss Julia Threlfall's than in Mr. Claude Threlfall's hands; but whether they could ever become friends was a very problematical question. Perhaps, if Mr. Hawley Paget had known as much of Mr. Claude Threlfall as this latter gentleman knew of him, he would never have imperilled his life in the way he did for the sake of an introduction. Julia had not been communicative to her lover on the subject of her brother's personal tastes and character. Probably she thought that they had better find each other out in the ordinary course of personal intimacy, and settle the question of friendship for themselves. She was a prudent girl, and her non-interference in the matter was no doubt a very judicious abstinence on her part.

“Julia,” said Mr. Hawley Paget to his beloved, “I have omitted to thank you for your very kind attentions to me when I was at the

Drum. Let me beg you to accept my thanks now."

"Oh! don't speak of obligations and thanks, Hawley; I am so thankful that you are quite well."

As she said this, Julia looked up lovingly, and with moistened eyes into her lover's face.

Mr. Hawley Paget bowed one of his politest and most decorous acknowledgments.

CHAPTER X.

JULIA AND MARY THRELFALL.

THE domestic atmosphere of Walmer Grange had become as much changed, and the general domestic consciousness as completely revolutionized, as what was passing outside in the feeling and face of nature, now that Claude Threlfall had taken his departure from his uncle's roof and Mr. Hawley Paget had taken up his residence there for a day or two. Nobody, with one exception, now felt snowed up in any sense whatever. The sense of restraint had passed away with the snow and the

absent Claude. Everything was open, candid, and unreserved now. Julia felt a pleasant sensation of relief, and was much more herself and at her domestic ease than she had hitherto been while her brother was at home. Mary, who was not altogether insensible to the feeling of relief, discovered fewer signs of pleasure at the change. The atmosphere was in some respects agreeable, but she had a very lively and slightly shivering feeling as if the snow which had been outside for so many days had at last found its way inside. Had she been consulted on the propriety of the change before it occurred she would have unhesitatingly said that she preferred things should be as they were. Claude certainly did keep her in a rather high pitch of nervousness, and taxed rather severely her ingenuity and resources to keep up appearances of candour and straightforwardness, but then there was something deliciously sensational in the under-hand manoeuvres by which she was able to keep a proper face on matters; and for this

reason what was underhand was thoroughly to her private taste, much more so than the dull proprieties which floated so evenly and transparently on the surface. Hawley was, it must be confessed, a very good young man, it was impossible not to respect him very highly; but then Claude was such a dear rogue, though it must be acknowledged that he did tell a great many fibs. She couldn't quite understand how it was, but she did like Claude very much, and was very sorry he had gone. However, she ought not to be selfish, for Julie liked Hawley, and she ought to be glad he had come for Julie's sake. Claude and Hawley were not at all alike; but it wouldn't do for young men to be exactly alike, of course not, for then there would be no opportunity for choice, and young ladies' tastes differed. She was glad Julie liked Hawley, and she would try and like him for Julie's sake, but she preferred Claude very much. Of course, that was a matter of taste,

but still she did like Claude, and was very, very sorry he had gone away.

Mr. Hawley Paget was an Oxford man and an M.A. He was studious and systematic in his reading, and always gave the mornings to hard work. After breakfast, therefore, he withdrew to the library, and after running his eye along the shelves in search of a Livy or Thucydides, neither of which he was so fortunate as to meet with on Mr. Threlfall's shelves, he took down a work of Hallam's, which engaged his undivided attention till lunch time.

Neither Julia nor Mary intruded on him, for they knew he always preferred his mornings to himself. Mr. Threlfall also respected the studious sanctity of those matutinal hours, and gave up the library to his visitor. Mr. Paget senior had returned to Dover, and Julia and Mary were sitting alone in the morning room, the former at some species of needle-work, and the latter at her landscape painting,

which she was now permitted to return to, but did not enjoy nearly so much as when she worked away on the sly in dear Claude's bedroom.

"I say, Julie," called out Mary, as she was working away, "what a very learned man your flame is, isn't he?"

"He's fond of reading," was the reply.

"I wonder what he's reading? Papa has not many profound books in his library. I'll be bound he has picked out the driest book on the shelves."

"Hawley's a lawyer, you know, Mary."

"But there are no law books there, I'm sure, now that amusing work of Blackstone's is packed up for Claude's use," and she laughed at the idea of Blackstone being in Claude's portmanteau.

"Hawley will find something else to interest him, I daresay," returned Julia.

"Something to interest him, Julie! I should have thought he would have found somebody to interest him under this roof," and her eyes

twinkled with fun as she looked up at her cousin.

Julia's eyes were fixed on her work, and did not notice the merry humour with which she was being regarded, and she made no reply. Mary went on with her work too, saying something about her picture, which did not quite give her satisfaction.

"I like more colour and warmth in the foreground. The colour is cold here—too cold, don't you think so, Julie?" at the same time turning her picture towards her cousin.

"I don't see any fault to find with it, Mary."

"Don't you, dear?" and again she took up her brush, charged with vandyke brown, in which she had mixed some burnt sienna, to enrich and give it warmth.

"Hawley's very clever, Julie," she again said, after a brief pause. "I shouldn't be at all surprised if one of these days he should be a judge; he'd make a capital judge."

“Do you think so?” was the short response to this admiring observation.

“I do, indeed; he’s so serious, isn’t he? Of course, a judge ought to be serious.”

“He is rather serious.”

“Oh! very. But I should think that even judges have some fun in them. There are some judges, you know, that don’t wear the black cap ever; Chancery judges, you know, Julie. How they must be tickled with the witnesses sometimes. Oh! they must laugh sometimes, I’m sure, even when they’re in court; and when they’re out, taking their wine, you know, after dinner, I’ll be bound they crack jokes and are as merry as pipers. There now! look at the picture now; that’s an improvement, isn’t it? It throws all the cold greys into the distant back ground. I never can draw figures well, or I’d put some humour in the scene. Claude, had he been here, could have done that nicely for me.”

“I think figures would have spoilt your picture. I like the repose in it.”

“ Oh ! I do like a little life and fun, Julie.”

Again the two young ladies were at their respective occupations, working on in silence. Mary never could be silent long together, so she again broke it with an enthusiastic remark on Mr. Hawley Paget's personal moral excellence.

“ Hawley must be very good, Julie.”

Julia returned no reply.

“ You know, dear,” continued Mary, “ I mean religious—very religious. A barrister, and especially a judge, can't be too religious, can he ?”

“ Everybody ought to be religious, Mary, just as everybody ought to have common sense, and right principles and feelings.”

“ Of course, dear ; I'm sure Hawley is religious. You know, he has Claude's room, and I'm obliged to go in there sometimes for my things in the wardrobe, and I saw this morning a book on the dressing table, just where Claude used to place Blackstone, when he had done with him. I just peeped into it

to see what it was, and found it was all Greek—I suppose the Greek Testament.”

“Hawley is a good Greek scholar.”

“I suppose so, and a very good man, too. I’ve often wondered, Julie, why good people are so very serious. Now, my idea is that when people are good they ought to be cheerful. Our rector, you know, at the old church is, of course, a very good man, but I don’t think I ever once saw him serious; I mean, you know, gloomy. When he laughs, he does laugh, don’t he? Every bit of his jolly old face joins in the general merriment. I do like to see people laugh, not smirk, you know; I like them to laugh till they shake and hold their sides, as if they expected they were going to crack. With some people you laugh till your eyes water, and you can’t keep your seat on your chair. Real hearty people are not afraid of laughing, are they? They don’t seem to be always thinking of their teeth as if they didn’t like to expose a cavity. Has

Hawley good teeth, Julie? I never could see into his mouth."

"Well, really, Mary, I can't answer your question. He doesn't show his teeth like some people."

"No, he doesn't; I wish he'd laugh, I should like to see. Good teeth are a great ornament to the face, whether of man or woman."

After a while, Mary began to soliloquize over her picture.

"I suppose some persons would call that now a smiling landscape; it certainly is very quiet and peaceful—yes, and pretty, too, though I have done it. I wonder what an out-and-out laughing landscape would be? I should like to be able to do a laughing landscape, a picture which would make a sensation to look at, thoroughly stir one up, and make one feel merry all over. I suppose that no nature but human nature ever laughs. I say, Julie," again addressing her cousin, "what a very polite man Hawley is, isn't he, dear?"

“Hawley is a gentleman, Mary.”

“Quite ; I don’t think I ever met such a gentlemanly man in my life.”

“You compliment him very highly, Mary.”

“Well, I must honestly say that I think he is the politest man I ever met. How particular he was to acknowledge your attentions to him when he was at the Drum ! And when you would have him spare his thanks, and looked up in his face as if you were so grateful that he hadn’t died in the snow, what a very polite bow he gave you ! I never saw such politeness in my life.”

Julia now raised her eyes, and they met those of her cousin, which expressed a good deal of dry humour as well as admiration. She blushed slightly as she replied—

“You are very observant of Hawley, Mary.”

“Why, yes, of course, dear ; he’s to be your husband and my first cousin. Do you know, Julie, I quite expected that he was going to kiss you at that moment. I’m sure,

if I had been he, I should have kissed you when you put up such a dear, loving, tearful look in my face. I did so want to see him kiss you, Julie. Did he ever kiss you, dear?"

"How you have been talking about Hawley all the morning, Mary! Why has he filled your head so this morning?"

"Julie, dear, did he ever kiss you? Now, do tell me, there's a dear."

"Of course he did."

"When? Where? How often?"

"Bless me, Polly, what a lot of curious questions!"

"Well, answer the last; how often?"

"What nonsense, Mary!"

"I'm sure you can remember. Twelve times, twenty, fifty times?"

"How am I to remember? How absurd of you!"

"I mean to have an answer, because I'm quite sure you know, Julie. I shall begin with ten and go upwards. Has he kissed you ten times?"

“How absurd, Mary! Well, no.”

“Of course more. Shall I go up by tens or fives?”

“Oh, Mary, what nonsense of you; neither.”

“Neither, eh? not so many as ten. Nine times?”

“I tell you, no.”

“Eight?”

“No; there, that will do.”

“He has kissed you then seven times. I’m to understand seven times?”

“I didn’t say so. Do be quiet and cease your ridiculous questions.”

“Come, come, Julie; you don’t like to answer. I verily believe he has never kissed you at all.”

“I’m sure he has,” said Julia, indignantly.

“Once, then, when you accepted him.”

“Of course he kissed me then.”

“Has he ever kissed you since?”

Julia was now somewhat vexed with her

cousin, and the blush on her cheeks deepened. She did not answer.

“He has only kissed you once, I see. There, didn’t I say that I was confident you knew how often? Of course you could remember once,” and Mary repeated recitativo the following lines :—

“ ‘ When age chills the blood, when our pleasures are past—
For years fleet away with the wings of the dove—
The dearest remembrance will still be the last,
Our sweetest memorial the *first* kiss of love.’ ”

“The first kiss of love, Julie! At all events you have your ‘sweetest memorial,’ haven’t you dear? I wonder when you’ll have the second. It’s so long coming it will be almost like another first. At this rate what a lot of sweet memorials you’ll have, won’t you?”

Julia did not correct her cousin, but looked very much annoyed.

“Don’t be vexed with me, Julie, but indeed I shouldn’t like such a lover as Hawley; I shouldn’t indeed, dear. Why, what is the

man made of, I wonder? If I liked him as you do, I'd soon set matters right; if he didn't kiss me, I'd kiss him. I'd soon teach him the use and worth of kisses between lovers. Why don't you kiss him?"

Julia was a very affectionate girl, and liked to be kissed and to kiss like other affectionate girls, and she did feel that Hawley was very sparing in his loving demonstrativeness. She had been very strongly impelled to kiss him when he came in with Mr. Beesley from the Drum, but he did not seem to invite it, and she naturally shrunk from the tender familiarity. She had never once kissed him, and was now getting disciplined in the abstinence from kissing on either side.

CHAPTER XI.

MARY THRELFALL BORES HAWLEY PAGET.

“MY library, Hawley,” said Mr. Threlfall, after dinner, “is not very rich in your special literature. Claude has all my law books. I’m afraid you found nothing to your taste this morning.”

“I never read law in vacations,” replied Hawley, “I change the occupations of my mind with a change of air. No, Mr. Threlfall, I didn’t look for law books, I thought I might have found some of Claude’s scholastic recreations among the books. I suppose his

Greek and Latin authors are under his own lock and key somewhere ?”

“Most likely,” rejoined Mr. Threlfall.

Mary thought with a smile to herself that if they ever had an existence they were under lock and key, and were not at all likely to be disturbed.

“I like to keep up my classical reading in vacations,” continued Hawley. “Livy and Thucydides are my favourite authors, especially the latter. I greatly admire the character of Thucydides. He was a serious, earnest man, and, with his great abilities, this lofty moral tone of his mind fitted him to produce the history which we all so greatly admire for its exact truthfulness. He never seems to use a word unnecessarily.”

Mary thought she had now discovered the model on which Hawley himself had been formed. Thucydides must have been a very great and good man, but she wondered if he had ever been in love. She would like to know how Thucydides made love.

“Was Thucydides ever married, Hawley?” she asked.

“I am not quite sure on that point, and can hardly venture to speak positively. He had considerable property, and Marcellinus says that he obtained it by marrying a wealthy lady of Thrace. This may have been the fact, but it is disputed.”

“It’s not worth disputing about, is it Hawley? How learned men do bother themselves, and wrangle over matters which are over and done with thousands of years ago, don’t they? What matters whether Thucydides was married or not?”

“It does not much matter, Mary, but you asked the question.”

“Ah, so I did,” she replied, slightly colouring at her own inconsistency, and a little roused by Hawley’s pertinent rejoinder, “but I was thinking of something else when I asked the question. I should like to have seen Thucydides in love, Hawley, shouldn’t you?”

“I should have taken no particular interest,

Mary, in a matter so purely private and personal."

"Oh! should you not? Now I should. Such a very proper person as Thucydides must have been quite a pattern to all lovers to come after him."

Hawley did not condescend to reply to this observation. Probably he thought Mary a little too frivolous, as he directed his attention to Julia.

"I have not as yet been so fortunate, Julia, as to meet with that book I was speaking about when I last had the pleasure of seeing you."

"Have you not, Hawley?" replied Julia. "I forget its name."

"Longinus' work, *Περὶ ὑψους*."

"What book is that, Hawley?" interposed Mary, who was not at all disposed to be passed by in this cool, indifferent kind of way. "Peri-what, did you say?"

"I referred to the 'Treatise on the Sublime,' by Dionysius Cassius Longinus. The work,

unfortunately, is a fragment, though the greater part has come down to us."

"Oh ! indeed ! " answered Mary, " the book, then, is not English ?"

"It is not ; it is written by a Greek in his vernacular. There's an excellent edition by Weiske. It was reprinted in London, and I very much wish to possess a copy."

"What's it all about ?" inquired Mary.

"Oratory, poetry, and matters of taste generally ; the style is excellent, and the observations of Longinus on these subjects are very penetrating and elevated."

"Oh ! indeed !" ejaculated Mary again, "all about the belles-letters, what's called polite literature."

"Something of that species of literature."

"Talking of politeness, Hawley," she said, bluntly, "don't you think that even politeness may be carried a little too far, and be sometimes out of place ?"

"Certainly not, Mary, certainly not. Politeness is never in excess and out of place ; of

course I refer to genuine, not superficial politeness."

"I don't know that exactly. Politeness is all very nice, and proper, and pleasant, and all that sort of thing; but if everybody was so very polite the world would seem to me like a big drawing-room or dancing academy."

"The courtesies of life," replied Paget, "are very agreeable to people of taste and refinement."

"So they are, but they are not hearty, are they? I do like something hearty; warm, you know, even if it should happen to be a little rough and awkward. Don't you like something hearty, Julie darling? I know you do, you dear old crony."

Julia scarcely knew what to answer to this playful sally of her cousin's; and she was somewhat disturbed by Mary's course of remarks, which she knew were meant for something like a poke at her lover.

"You're a merry girl, Mary," she said, smiling.

“And something sensible, too, Julie. Now only fancy, Julie, a couple of lovers carrying on their little private and personal affair, as Hawley calls it, according to the strict rules of drawing-room politeness! Why, the thing’s ridiculous, isn’t it, pet? Taste and refinement are surely quite consistent with those little delicate intimacies which one wouldn’t wish to see exhibited in a drawing-room. You don’t know Claude, Hawley, but do you know he doesn’t always take his hat off when he meets me, and come bending and bowing and scraping like a dancing master. If he did wouldn’t I give it him? I’d teach him the rules of etiquette between lovers! I’d shake him up; but there’s no need of that, he’s more disposed to do that sort of thing to me. And yet Claude is very polite, for all that.”

Mr. Threlfall laughed, as did also Julia.

“You and Claude, Polly, are well matched,” said the former,—“a couple of merry romps.”

“To be sure we are, papa. I like a good

romp now and then, especially with Claude. He has got such a lot of fun in him."

"Talking of Longinus," said Paget, turning the conversation, "there's a copy of him in the Bodleian, Mr. Threlfall; I once began a translation of him into English."

Mary was very talkative this evening, and would stick to her favourite topic, as Hawley did to his.

"I think, Hawley, we want a good many people translated into English, genuine, frank, hearty English, you know. There are people who have spoken their mother tongue all through life, and mixed a good deal in society, and seen not a little of the world, who are as provokingly stiff and crabbed and difficult to be understood as a dead language. Now, Hawley, if you will leave Longinus and translate, or rather transform, some of these obscure, precise people, you would be doing some real social service."

Hawley showed unmistakable signs that he was being bored by Miss Mary, and Julia

noticed it. She began to be alarmed for what Mary might say next in her wicked, rampant mood, and rising from the table suggested that they should withdraw and leave the gentlemen till tea time. This movement was Miss Mary's duty, as her father's daughter sitting at the head of the table, but whether she thought she had said quite enough, and might, if she remained longer, speak a little too personally, she arose promptly and with apparent perception of the propriety, to lead the way out of the room, Mr. Hawley Paget politely holding the door, and bowing very politely indeed as the two ladies passed out.

"I really couldn't help it, Julie," said Mary, when they were together in the drawing-room. "Hawley has been in my head all day long, and I was determined to give him a bit of my mind. He wants shaking up."

"Pray don't shake him up any more, Polly, when he comes in to tea. Promise me you won't talk in that way any more to-night."

“ Well, I won’t ; but I’m just in the mood, and I should so like to say just a little more.”

“ Do oblige me, and don’t.”

“ Well, I won’t. I wonder whether he’ll kiss you to-night before he goes to bed.”

“ What nonsense you do talk, Polly !”

“ Well, he ought to after all I’ve said to him.”

Mary kept her promise to her cousin, and said nothing more, when the gentlemen were summoned to tea, that could be construed as at all personal to Hawley Paget. He, on his side, seemed to experience a feeling of relief that she rarely spoke at all for the rest of the evening, and never once addressed herself to him. The fact was that Mary was not in the least conscious of any reaction in her thoughts and feelings, for she had much ado to restrain herself from her former volubility on more than one provoking occasion, but she had pledged her word to her cousin, and she could not, therefore, recall it. It was her turn now

to be the victim of passive irritation, and she had to exert the most forcible self-control to make it even endurable. Paget could not have been more studiously polite and observant of the rules of etiquette than if he had been the veriest stranger, introduced to them for the first time that evening. He sat on his chair inflexibly upright, only relaxing his rigidity by occasional slight inclinations of the upper part of his manhood whenever he addressed himself to Julia, or received a reply from her. His attentions were certainly special to Julia, but they were essentially respectful, and not in the least vivacious. The conversation chiefly turned on poetry and the drama, on which he made several judicious and appreciative remarks. The drama, he knew, was Julia's passionate admiration, and he talked to her on the subject as if he had been her professor of English literature, greatly to her entertainment and edification. Oh ! how Mary did repent of her promise that evening. Shakspeare's play of " As you like

it " was noticed among other of the works of the immortal bard, and Paget dwelt much on the character of the melancholy Jaques. Mary was sick of Jaques and Touchstone, and wanted to talk of Orlando and Rosalind. What a fine opportunity was here to say something to the point! What a number of delicate little incidents was afforded her for exquisite expatiation on the subject that was uppermost in her thoughts. Oh! the binding, chafing misery of a promise! Her irritation at her enforced silence was so great, that she put all the sugar due to the four cups into one, and, with curious inconsistency, into Hawley's cup of tea, who only took an infinitesimally small quantity of that article, but was much too polite to notice the excess with which he had been accidentally favoured. Julia, who liked to taste the sugar in her tea, was not at all aware of its entire absence from the beverage, so wrapt was she in the learned discourse of her admirer. Mr. Threlfall was the only one who detected the omission, and

he bluntly told his daughter she had forgotten the sugar as he returned his cup to be replenished.

Then the conversation, which was carried on wholly between Hawley and Julia, turned to the subject of fiction, and the comparative merits of Thackeray and Dickens. Mr. Paget quite agreed with Julia that fiction had a claim to a distinguished place in polite literature, and that a highly civilized community demanded the peculiar entertainment and instruction it alone afforded. He did not at all agree with those who maintained that fiction should be entertaining only. Fiction, he said, photographed the more delicate and intimate experiences of human life, and enabled the master of his art to exhibit the play and conflict of the passions. But he denounced energetically the abuse of this species of literature. He admired but very few writers of fiction, because they nearly all fell into the egregious and demoralising error of constructing their plots on the monstrous assumption

that human life was always mixed up intimately with the greatest villainies, and that the violation of all the prohibitions of the Decalogue was a common social fact. He thought there was abundant scope for fiction in the varieties of human character, out of which incidents of the liveliest interest could be imagined to arise, illustrating intellectual and moral contrasts and conflicts. Dickens was in many respects admirable, but he was unquestionably to be blamed, with his wonderful powers of insight and delineation, for condescending to use such base and revolting materials. Most of Dickens' creations were rather caricatures than characters. Thackeray he considered had struck the true vein of fiction, and was decidedly truer to nature, and more to his taste.

Mary listened to this lengthened discourse of Paget's, which he illustrated by many examples, with some interest, but he afforded her so many admirable opportunities of interjecting something of her own, in the *ad*

hominem way, that she could not forgive herself her rashness in promising to hold her tongue for the rest of that night. But she would have her turn next day, that she would. "As you like it" was a most interesting play, and she would return to it on the following evening with a vengeance, and supply some grave omissions in the quite overlooked personages of the love-sick Orlando, and the beautiful Rosalind. And wouldn't she ransack her memory for what she had read in Dickens and Thackeray, and dear old Walter Scott ! Hawley should have it thick to-morrow night, yes, and at dinner too, for she had a lot to say. The next morning, however, Mr. Hawley Paget politely requested the loan of Mr. Threlfall's carriage to convey him to Dover immediately after breakfast ; and, to the unspeakable chagrin of Mary, she saw her victim depart after taking a tenderly polite leave of Julia, which, though tender, was much too exquisitely polite to include a kiss.

CHAPTER XII.

MOREY MAGUIRE SEES A WAY OUT OF THE FIX.

It must not be supposed that Claude Threlfall began his career in London in the enjoyment of perfect moral complacency. His conscience certainly was of a very elastic quality, and bore a considerable amount of pressure, but it was not absolutely crushed. He both thought and felt at times, in the solitude of his own reflections, and neither his thinking nor feeling was dissociated from an inward sense of shame and self-reproach. But it

was wonderful how this inward moral blushing would pass away like an evanescent shadow from the face of his better self; and how prompt were his apologies and self-justifications to take off the keen edge of the whispered rebuke. And it must, in moral honesty and candour, be admitted that he did have something to say for himself in arrest of a severe judgment. Was he not being forced into a groove in which it was against his nature, taste, fitness, and everything else in him, to run? In short, was he not urged, by the cruellest of goads, to perform an impossibility? How could he deny his own nature and hold back, with the feeble, fragile cords of an artificial will, the upward soarings of his strong aspiring genius? An artist in his very mould, impulses, aptitudes, how could he turn to the drudgery of dry, dusty law?

“D—— the law!” he said, in the excitement of his indignation at the injustice which was being done him, and when he was feeling most sensitively the moral disquietude of his unfor-

tunate position. “D—— the law ! It has damned a good many in its time, d—— it !”

Claude Threlfall had been somewhat “exercised,” as the strict Scotch term is, in his moral reflections as he was busy emptying his portmanteau into the drawers of his bedroom, and this rather emphatic ejaculation escaped him as he kicked the empty valise under his bed. He had taken up a temporary abode in Cecil-street, Strand, in a boarding house there, until he could decide on more permanent arrangements. It was a convenient locality, both for his adopted Inn of Court and the Royal Academy, which was at that time in lodgings like himself in its late quarters, the National Gallery. If he could not fix on the precise *via media*, he rather preferred to incline to the Royal Academy, as his occupation would lie more particularly in that establishment. Here he remained for about three weeks, and before that time expired he had entered himself at Gray’s Inn to please his uncle and fulfil his promise to his sister,

and had been admitted as an art student of the Academy to please himself.

His uncle had given him a cheque on his banker for the first half-year's payment in advance, and had added to it a *douceur* of fifty pounds to express and emphasize his warm approval of his nephew's zeal, and his best wishes for his legal success; so that Claude was in possession of £200. By the time he had been working a week in the Academy he had formed the acquaintance of several art students, and an intimacy sprung up between himself and one of them which led to his acceptance of the proposal that he should remove to St. John's Wood, where he could have a comfortable bedroom and share a studio, a large, commodious room, with the right aspect for light.

This new acquaintance was one Morey Maguire, the son of an Irish father many years deceased. His mother was still living, but not residing under her son's roof. He was two or three years younger than Claude,

although, being tall and robust, he looked very near the same age. His complexion was rather fair, and he cultivated all his facial hair, which was not as yet very abundant, and, like most artists, at that time, left the hair of his head to do what it liked with itself, which, being inclined to curl, hung about his temples and shoulders with easy and picturesque freedom. There was nothing in his appearance to indicate his Irish descent, but he had all the rollicking vivacity of the Irish temperament, and was warm in his attachments, and recklessly generous. His demonstrativeness at once attracted and captivated Claude, and these two young men became very soon inseparable friends.

It was a small house in the north-western extremity of St. John's Wood where Claude now took up his abode, but as there were few rooms in it they were of ample dimensions. The house was detached and had a considerable quantity of garden back and front for a London suburban residence.

Maguire had mentioned that his sister was residing with him, and Claude was agreeably surprised to meet a really beautiful girl, who appeared to be about eighteen years of age, quite a contrast to her brother in the richness of her dark complexion and the almost jetty blackness of her luxuriant hair. Every feature of her face was exquisitely chiselled, and a pair of large black eyes, lighted up with great animation and expression, gave her face great force of character, and convinced Claude that she was as intelligent as she was beautiful. Maguire was very proud of his sister Margaret, and loved her dearly, and she was as warmly attached to him. On his first introduction to this charming young lady, who, though inexpensively dressed, was evidently very studious of taste and effect, Claude was so arrested by her that he gazed more intently than good manners dictated or seemed to be altogether agreeable to the object who had thus rivetted him. Margaret received him with politeness, and would have done so with

a little more touch of cordiality and frankness, which were natural to her, if he had not so suddenly arrested her by his very marked observation. This slight restraint soon wore off, and when the three sat down to dinner for the first time, which was early in the day—at the usual fashionable lunch time—they became very chatty together, and were mutually pleased with each other's acquaintance.

As time went on they became thoroughly domesticated, and Claude congratulated himself on this fortunate acquaintanceship with Maguire. During term time he was never able to dine at home, as he spent his mornings in the Royal Academy and dined at his Inn. He was resolved to keep his terms to qualify himself for his call to the Bar. This he could at least do without interfering with his special studies. Between terms he always went home from the Academy with Maguire and dined with him and his sister, passing the remainder of the day in the studio in company with his

friend. But whether he was at home or in town he saw nothing of Margaret after breakfast, unless he sat up late at night to keep Maguire company, who nearly always retired after midnight, as his sister, with very rare exceptions, invariably returned at a late hour.

Sunday was the only exception to this monotonous and not altogether agreeable regularity, and Claude took advantage one Sunday of Margaret's presence to invite confidence and get an explanation of this unaccountably mysterious state of things. He began the story of his life with the account of his father's professional and domestic misfortunes ; his early death and the tragic end of his mother on the high seas ; how he and his sister Julia, from their tenderest years, had been under the care of their paternal uncle ; and how his uncle, against his inclinations, was driving him to the profession of the Bar, which he hated with such an intense loathing, that even the dinners he ate at his Inn, excellent as they were, invariably disagreed with him and

made him ill. He told them how he was deceiving his uncle in the course he was pursuing as an art student, and at what peril. He concealed nothing but the mutual engagement between himself and his cousin Mary, and on this subject, for some reason, he said nothing.

Both Maguire and his sister listened with interest to his story, and expressed their sympathy with him. The former reviewed all the circumstances, expatiating on the absurdities and mischiefs of prejudice, roundly condemning the uncle and justifying the nephew. Maguire was quite sensible of the moral difficulties of the question, but he came to the conclusion that Claude was perfectly right to be directed and decided by his natural genius, and if that involved a little duplicity, well, for the life of him, he could not see how it was to be helped.

Margaret was much of the same opinion.

“I thought you and Margaret would agree with me, Morey, in this matter.”

“I do, Claude. I don’t know how to disagree with you. Your uncle has put you in a fix, and if the fix is a wrong one he of course is responsible for it. By St. Claude Lorraine! your great namesake, cling to your love of art with the passion that he did. You’ll be a master, Claude, I swear you will, in your own figure line. You draw grandly.”

“Hardly that, Morey,” replied Claude, slightly reddening at this enthusiastic admiration of his friend.

“You do, on my soul you do; I’m not flattering. What you have done in the living model room has astonished everybody. Why you’ve not yet attended one of the anatomy courses, because the lectures are given before Christmas, and yet, by Jove! Claude, you’ve amazed us all.”

“You speak warmly, as a hearty friend, Morey.”

“I’ve got an idea, Claude, that will get you out of this precious fix. Yes, I see now how it can be done. All that lying and deception

bothers you, I know it does. I hate lying; nothing like having everything above board. Now look here, you say you depend entirely upon your uncle. Of course you must have money. Now keep this state of things up for a couple of years. It's horribly hard to play the hypocrite for a couple of years. That's a terribly long time, Margie, to appear in one character, isn't it? You'd hardly like such a long run as that, eh, Peg? Well, for a couple of years. Do you think you could keep it up for a couple of years, Claude?"

"Why a couple of years?"

"Wait a bit, there's something else. You say old Threlfall will cut you off with a shilling. Do you mind that?"

"By Jove! I do, Morey."

"Don't."

"Don't?"

"Yes, don't. I'll tell you why. You'll make more than the old fellow will leave you. I'll stake my right hand on it, and my left wouldn't be of much use to me."

“But my uncle will leave me thirty thousand pounds.”

“And you will make thirty thousand pounds before he leaves it to you. How old is he? Never mind how old he is, you’ll make more than that by your own skill; I’ll swear you will. Don’t bother yourself about the thirty thousand pounds. That’s not the difficulty; the lying is the difficulty—keeping up false appearances for two years—that’s the only difficulty I see. Can you do it, Claude?”

“Well, I think I can; but why two years?”

“Why, just this. The biennial gold medal of the Academy has just been awarded. You are cock-sure of being the next medalist. Don’t smile as if you doubted it. I tell you you are. You will have it for certain, and then, you know, you will be sent abroad to study three years at the expense of the Academy; and if you don’t come back from Italy a Tintoretto, or even a Titian, I was almost going to say a Michael Angelo, I’ll turn

cannibal, and eat all the living models in the Academy."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Claude, "that's capping your admiration sublimely, Morey."

"It's not only my opinion," said the enthusiastic friend; "every fellow says the same. They say they have no chance against you either in drawing or colouring. You'll be an R.A. in five years, or my name is not Morey Maguire. Can you keep it up for two years?"

"I fear, Morey, I shall have to keep it up for a good many more than two years."

"No you won't. Make up your mind to keep it up for two years; but, by Titian! how late we are at breakfast! Why, it's just on eleven o'clock! We can't talk any more now; we must be off to church."

CHAPTER XIII.

AT TITIAN VILLA.

“TITIAN’S your patron saint, I suppose, Morey,” said Claude, as they sat over their glass of wine after dinner this Sunday.

“Morey more commonly swears by Titian,” observed Margaret, “than any of the great masters of his art. That’s why our ambitious residence is dubbed ‘Titian Villa;’ it was styled ‘Lilac Cottage,’ when we first came to live here.”

“Yes, Titian’s my tutelary divinity in the

painting art. You know, of course, something of his life. He lived very simply and unostentatiously, even after his great reputation was established. I like Titian, because, like my very humble self, he not only painted historical and mythological subjects, but landscapes. He was a great lover of nature, and so true, too, to that divine mother of all art. And what a glorious colourist he was! But mind, I don't forget the lessons of the Academy, though I swear by Titian. How should I with such a splendid example? Titian was no slave to any master; he served with scrupulous fidelity his great mistress—Nature. He always painted from Nature, and as he himself saw and felt her. There were no tricks in Titian—no base servility. Oh! he was a glorious fellow, Claude. You'll be a Titian, a Giorgione, a Da Vinci, a Raffaele; you have their magnificent breadth of feeling, truthful eye, noble self-assertion and independence, powerful hand, and you lay on your colour grandly! If I only live to the age of

Raffaelle I shall see you on the pedestal of fame, and as rich as Michael Angelo !”

“Ha ! ha ! Morey ; lay it on thick !” replied Claude, laughing at the extravagant adulation of his friend.

“Thick ! By St. Titian ! I can’t lay it on thick enough. You think I flatter you, but you’re not so blind, with all your affected modesty, not to see that you’re the favourite in Trafalgar Square. Was that flattery when you know who said the other day at the Academy that your colouring was worthy of Giorgione, who was Titian’s model in the art of colouring ? Don’t the fellows nick-name you Giorgie now, after that professional compliment ? And how Brandon, Paul Brandon, you know, first coloured, and then looked black as thunder when he was told that there was too much of Giordano in his manner of painting ? The fellows will dub him Giordie after that. Brandon is wonderfully clever as an imitator ; he will copy anything so that you can’t distinguish his work from the

original. But Paul has no creative genius, no individual feeling, no artistic personality. He'll make a living with the picture dealers, who'll employ him to make duplicates for them to pass off as originals. He'll do well; but Claude, old fellow, he won't be worthy to pick up your brush if you should let it drop, only a Cæsar will be worthy of that honour, as the Emperor Charles said to Titian."

"On my life, Morey, say no more. I can stand no more of this. Margaret," Claude said, turning towards her, "your brother is the most consummate flatterer I ever fell in with."

Margaret was blushing very deeply, and was plainly very much annoyed about something, and Claude could not avoid to see it. Morey looked towards his sister at the same time, and also observed her uneasiness.

"Peggy, I beg pardon! I really meant nothing disrespectful to Brandon. A fellow must be something who is worthy to be called a Giordano. He was a wonderful worker was

Giordano, and imitated the style of Titian so closely that it is no easy matter to distinguish his works from those of that great master. That's no mean power, Peggy, I can tell you. A fellow who can do what Titian did must be a great man in his way. There was only this difference between them—Titian painted from nature and himself, and Giordano painted from Titian or somebody else. That was all the difference. It's no use blinking the fact, Peggy. Artists must be plain, truthful, conscientious men, you know. Since Claude has been in the Academy, every fellow knows that Brandon's chance of the gold medal is all up. He knows it too, and is naturally annoyed at it. But he has not the ghost of a chance. There'll be two Claudes in the great roll of painters, ten years hence, and the modern Claude will be the greater of the two. But Claude Lorraine will always be a great man in his landscape line, and so will Paul Brandon be in his consummate imitative power."

"No more of this, Morey. Brandon's a

clever fellow, and has no reason to be jealous of me.”

Claude had discovered in the course of this conversation, a secret which interested him. Margaret was the affianced of Paul Brandon, there was no doubt of that. She had betrayed her wounded feeling too demonstratively by her blushes, and the frown on her dark brow while her brother was lavishing his praise on him, and making comparisons to her lover's disadvantage. The opinion of Maguire, if enthusiastically and extravagantly expressed, was secretly gratifying to Claude, for Maguire himself stood well in the Academy, and was regarded as a promising student. Though young, he was one of the oldest students then attending there, and was a general favourite, as well for his acknowledged talents as for his thoroughly warm heart and open generosity of character. But after this discovery which Claude had made, and which Margaret herself knew had been betrayed to him by the apology which her brother had

offered her, he felt as if he should incur some abatement of Margaret's friendship, who would naturally be sensitive on her lover's reputation. It was therefore to preserve the friendly intimacy which he had hitherto enjoyed with her that he deprecated any further comparisons, and made the complimentary remark which he had just uttered.

"Jealous of you!" replied Maguire, "I should think not. Like all the rest of us he must admire your fine abilities, and feel a brotherly pride in the splendid career which is opening before you. He's no more jealous of you than the stars are jealous of the sun."

It was some relief to Claude, whose modesty Maguire was putting so severely to the test, that at that moment Brandon entered the room. It was the end of June, and he had called to take Margaret for a stroll in the fields about Kilburn. Claude noticed a slight coolness in the way Brandon greeted him, though he was very hearty in his recognition of Maguire, and of course significantly cordial

in his address to Margaret. This circumstance was, perhaps, due to the greater and longer intimacy between Brandon and the Maguires, and the relation in which he stood to them as the accepted suitor of Margaret. But occurring as it did, so immediately on the conversation which was taking place, Claude naturally enough noticed it, but only at once to dismiss all further thought about it.

“Sit down for five minutes, Paul, and take a glass of wine with us while Peggy is putting on her bonnet,” said Maguire, pushing the decanter and a clean glass towards him. “Talk of the devil, &c., as the old saying is, well, here you are.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Morey,” returned Brandon, helping himself to the wine, and raising the glass to his lips. “It’s a mild, fruity wine, this port of yours, Morey ; not fiery. I hate fiery port, though I am a—”

“Hot blooded, warm hearted, tolerably

good sort of fellow," said Morey, cutting him short; "and all those qualities, and some others I could mention—but I spare your modesty—are not commonly predicated of the gentleman whose name you were going to repeat. Talking of modesty, here's Claude Threlfall, as modest as a girl of eighteen. He affects not to know that he is going up the ladder of professional distinction five rounds and more at a time."

"The affectation of modesty, no doubt, Morey," replied Brandon, with a smile at his friend, which Claude thought was a little constrained and slightly sardonic.

"I'm not conscious of any affectation, Morey," said Claude, addressing himself to Maguire, for he observed that Brandon did not look at him when he made the remark. "I wish to succeed in my profession, and work with that object."

"Succeed ! By Titian ! you will succeed. Doesn't every fellow say, Paul, that Threlfall is the next medalist ?"

“I have heard some say as much, but young artists, no more than other and older men, are prophets.”

This was said in a tone of voice and with a look that seemed to express a difference of opinion in the speaker, and some slight contempt for the prophets.

“Take another glass of wine, Paul,” said Morey, pointing to the decanter near him; “it’s deliciously fruity, isn’t it? You don’t like harsh flavoured port.”

Margaret was quickly attired, and now entered the room, and Paul left his chair to accompany her in a walk.

“Here, take this before you go, Paul,” called out Morey, filling his glass for him, “a smack of fruity wine on your lips will sweeten conversation, and sugar the pleasures of your walk.”

Brandon nodded a friendly no to Morey, and followed Margaret out of the room.

“Brandon’s a good fellow at bottom,” said

Maguire, when he and Claude were left alone, "a sterling good fellow. He's in love with Peggy."

"So I perceive."

"Yes, a recent affair, too; and therefore rather hot, you know. There's a good deal of the southerner about him, and all Italians are ardent in their passions."

"Is he an Italian, then? he looks like one, but his name is English."

"He does look like one, doesn't he? No, he's not an Italian, nor of Italian descent, so far as I know. It's his dark, swarthy complexion, and the way he wears his long, straight, black hair thrown back off his face, I suppose, that gives him the appearance of one. It's a handsome face, isn't it?"

Claude did think that the face was well formed and the features good, but he did not like the expression, for there was something of furtiveness in the eye, above which the eyebrows dipped a little too much inwardly, and

the lips indicated a little disdain in the slight depression of their extremities.

“It’s a striking face,” he replied.

“Well, now we are alone, I’ll just tell you something of my history. You told us all about yourself this morning, and you may care to know something about me and Peggy. I’m not the son of an artist like you, but, like some others in our profession, born of humble parentage, and left to make my own way in the world. But I have been among men of the brush from my earliest recollection. My pedigree gives me amazingly little trouble, for I know nothing of my maternal ancestors, and all I know of my father is that he had a father who lived somewhere in Ireland, where my father was born ; but in which of the counties I never heard. My first acquaintance with my father and mother was behind the scenes of a London theatre ; that’s my earliest, most impressive, and lively remembrance of them. As I grew up I began to understand the

matter, and then I knew that my father was head stage-carpenter, and my mother a player of subordinate characters, a sort of third-rate actress. I have nothing to be conceited about on the score of extraction, have I? Well, to cut a long story short, I became a hanger on to the stage too, sometimes using the carpenter's hammer, but more frequently dabbling in the paint pots, and spoiling the brushes. The heaven of my delight was to be among the scene painters, and wait upon them at their work. At length I was allowed to essay the brush in some rough work which it was hardly possible to do any harm to, and sometimes, without permission, I tried my hand where, if I had been seen, I should have had a clout of the head. What I once did in the darkness of my sly labours was observed, and obtained the light of somebody's complacent approval. From that day I became an humble member of the scene-painting staff; and so I went on till I was entrusted with work of

some importance, and was, as I thought, liberally paid for it. I was now ambitious to become an artist, painted something which was pronounced creditable, sent it on nobody's but my own recommendation as a sort of diploma picture to the Royal Academy, and was agreeably surprised to be informed that I might attend there as an art student with all the advantages afforded by that respectable guild. And there I have been ever since, and there, as you know, I am now.

“So much about myself. Now for Peggy. She, too, like me, passed her juvenile existence on the boards during that lively time within the walls of a theatre when nobody else was there but the painters, carpenters, and all the rest of the industrial household. The theatre was little Peggy's whole world, solar system, universe, and all besides. Of course her ambition was to follow in the exalted steps of her mother, and she made her *debüt* when very small among a lot of little urchins who were

wanted for a scene in a pantomime. As she grew up, her pretty face and connection by birth with the establishment secured for her a small engagement, and, as she acquitted herself to the satisfaction of the manager, who thought he could make something of her, she was put under the instruction of a dramatic teacher, and regularly educated for the stage. She reads and speaks well, has a wonderfully retentive memory, considerable dramatic feeling, and is now generally thought to be a rising actress. You see what she is personally. Presentable at least, is she not? She is an enthusiast in her profession, for the associations of the stage are necessarily paramount with her, and acting is her habit, and the profoundest reality of her existence. And she's a darling of a girl, pure, loving, unsuspecting, generous to a thousand faults. I love her with all my soul, and am half jealous of Brandon for coming in between us. My poor mother broke down in health, and is now in

a dramatic alms-house, and my father, as you know, is dead. That's all about us. Take another glass of port, and then we'll have a stroll in the fields."

CHAPTER XIV.

FRUITY PORT.

THERE were very few houses beyond Titian Villa, when Morey Maguire and his sister resided there, although at the present time it is quite embosomed in that populous north-westerly suburb known as St. John's Wood. Beyond extended the open country, intersected with pretty green lanes, leading in one direction to Kilburn and Edgware, and more northerly to the picturesque higher lands of Hampstead and Highgate. Maguire and

Claude took the latter direction, and Margaret and Brandon strolled across the fields towards Kilburn. As we cannot accompany both pairs in their Sunday afternoon ramble, we shall decide to follow the lovers as the more interesting couple, and as more directly contributing to the development of our story.

“You must be tired of your rehearsals, Margie,” said Brandon, “and by this time are quite at home in your character, I suppose?”

“I have studied the character carefully, and shall be glad when the first night is over.”

“It’s a difficult part, Margie, is the character of Ophelia, but you’ll play it well, I’ve no fear of that. Do you know I never could understand Hamlet’s conduct to Ophelia. To my mind his treatment of her is the least satisfactory part of that fine tragedy.”

“Hamlet’s was a noble mind o’erthrown by the discovery of his father’s murder, and the

repugnance he felt to his mother's early marriage with his uncle, whom he had suspected of foul play."

"But he was in love with Ophelia."

"True, but another and more violent passion had seized him than the passion of love. Hate is a more masterful and consuming passion than love."

"I doubt it. If a man loves he loves with his whole soul, and can find no room for hatred."

"Storm and sunshine are often strangely commingled in nature, and the violence of darker passions will often overwhelm the tender and serener sentiments of the soul."

"But the sunshine breaks forth in triumphant strength, and heralds its victory with the rainbow of peace."

"Hatred of his uncle, and the passion of revenge, were not the only sentiments which stopped the current of his affection for Ophelia; his pure and noble soul was revolted by

the conjugal fall of his mother, which powerfully shook his confidence in the fidelity of woman."

"Shakspeare should have exhibited, in the person of Hamlet, the divine majesty of the love of man for woman, and shown love to be mightier than everything."

"Our great poet was the interpreter of nature; other and inferior men might have done this, but Shakspeare, like a true artist, drew from nature."

Margaret uttered this with the warmth of admiration for the great dramatist, and put an emphasis on her words. She did not notice that the brows of Brandon knitted, and that he even winced as he received this reply. He did not answer for a few moments, and they walked on, he cutting with his cane at the tall weeds as if he were not quite at his ease, and not in his most generous mood. Nor was he. The words of Margaret were suggestive. Had not he been told that he was a Giordano by a high authority in the Academy—a copier of

other men, rather than a student of nature ? Was he, then, no true artist ? Had Margaret heard this ! Not a doubt of it. Her brother Morey, in his extravagant admiration of Threlfall, had no doubt told her that his rival had been complimented as a Giorgione, and he put on the lower level of a Giordano. Was he not nicknamed Giordie, and Threlfall Giorgie ? Morey must have mentioned this to Margaret. He had been speaking that very afternoon of the probable next medalist, and even in his presence had said that Threlfall was sure of the distinction. Margaret had heard all this ; and there was meaning in the words she had just used, personal meaning. All these thoughts rapidly passed through his mind, and now his brows met, and his lips were close set, as he cut at the flower of a tall clambering woodbine and severed it from its stem.

Margaret was quite unconscious of any point in her observation, and did not notice the mental disturbance of her lover.

“ I can’t help thinking,” said Brandon, after

this brief pause, "that Shakspeare misses nature there ; it's a blemish in his play."

"No more a blemish, Paul, than that beautiful white flower which a few seconds since was hanging on its stalk with so much graceful simplicity."

"A rebuke, by heaven !" muttered her companion to himself. "Is she, too, fascinated by this upstart ? Morey was a fool to ask that fellow Threlfall to lodge with him. The boy's head's turned with his ridiculous admiration of the conceited puppy," striking at the same time a stray dog that sneaked passed them in the lane, and which he sent yelping away.

"Hamlet ought never to have broke with Ophelia," he said, still holding to his opinion.

"I shouldn't like you to be Hamlet when I play Ophelia to him for the first time."

"Why not ?"

"Your conception of his character, or, rather what he ought to be, would embarrass me ; you'd spoil my performance ; I should break down."

“Why?”

“You wouldn’t be true to nature.”

“D—— this everlasting iteration of truth to nature!” he ejaculated, inwardly.

“He who plays Hamlet must understand Shakspeare, and follow him. He was a true poet of nature, Paul, depend on it; a genuine artist.”

“There’s no chance of my spoiling your performance,” replied Brandon, striving to allay the irritation which Margaret’s constant reference to nature and the true artist produced, as if she were a stinging nettle; “your Hamlet, like all the Hamlets I ever saw, will be faithful to stage traditions, no doubt, and will rate you as savagely as you can wish while he dismisses you to a nunnery.”

“I don’t wish him to be savage, either, and tear a passion to tatters. I do not think my Hamlet will o’er-step the modesty of nature, but hold the mirror up to her. He will feign his madness sufficiently well to deceive my poor distracted heart, and pour some small

drop of consolation in the wounds he makes. He has rehearsed that scene in the true spirit of Shakspeare, and made his madness very apparent."

"I shall never like Hamlet in that scene."

"It's human nature."

"Then nature wants mending, and your true artists would tailor her more to my taste at least."

"How mean you, Paul?"

"Why, I mean that a lover should always be depicted by the poet as true to his object as the needle to the pole."

"That would be untrue to nature."

"Do you mean to say, Margie, that a lover, a real genuine lover, could ever be cruel to the girl he loves?"

"Not a real genuine lover, certainly; but men are not commonly lovers of this exalted quality."

"Men may feign love; but a lover is a lover and must be true."

“The love of men, Paul,” replied Margaret, in a playful, yet half serious mood, “is tainted with selfishness.”

“By heaven, no ! Margie. Selfishness is the arch antagonist of love.”

“Very true ; but men love selfishly, and therefore do not love truly.”

“You’re not speaking your serious conviction ; you know it’s not true. I believe a man loves with a purity, ardour, and strength of passion which nothing can even cool, much less overthrow.”

“Nothing, Paul ?”

“Yes, nothing ; what is mightier than love ?”

“Jealousy.”

“Jealousy ! but a real lover is never jealous.”

“Shakspeare thought differently. You surely cannot doubt that Othello loved Desdemona, and yet he—”

“Was played upon, foully abused by that

arch villain Iago," interrupted Brandon. "Yes, I allow Othello loved, but then he was deceived."

"But, according to you, love ought no more to be deceived by the wily arts of cunning, than overthrown by the fair force of the wrestler."

"Who can resist the devil?"

"We are told to resist the devil. Plainly, he may be resisted, and love, which you say is almighty in a man's heart, must be able to do so."

"It was a powerful temptation, most cunningly devised in Othello's case."

"I don't think so. Othello, like most men, was capable of jealousy, and Iago knew it, and wrought upon this weakness in his character. And with what a trifling, contemptible instrument, too—a pocket-handkerchief! but yet, as he says, 'trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmation strong as proofs,' &c. You know the rest. That is the pivot and moral of that great tragedy."

“You are an actress, Margie, and are up in Shakspeare.”

“I am ; and a woman too, and I speak from my womanly instincts and observation of human character, quite as much as from the pages of our great dramatist.”

They were now in the fields, and the friendly shade of the trees in the hedgerows invited them to sit down.

“How do you like Threlfall?” began Brandon, as he stretched himself on the grass ; “he has been with you now several months.”

“I rather like him, he’s frank and very agreeable ; but I see very little of him, as our respective occupations separate us for the greater part of the day. He’s clever ; according to Morey, quite a genius.”

“Yes, he’s unquestionably clever, and a genius too, but Morey will spoil him with his extravagant admiration of his talents. You know your brother Morey, Margie, is about as unselfish and loving a nature as a woman. He often reminds me of the passionate ardour

of a woman in the enthusiasm of his feelings towards those whom he admires and loves.”

“You are more complimentary to my sex than I am to yours. But speaking from my deliberate judgment, and without feminine partiality, I do think a woman’s love more sterling and endurable than that of a man. Yes, Morey has a good deal of the woman in him.”

“And therefore is likely enough to spoil Threlfall. Women, you must admit, do sometimes spoil men; I won’t say, as Hamlet tells Ophelia in his brutal savagery, make ‘monsters’ of them.”

“I don’t think he’ll spoil Claude.”

“Flattery will spoil anybody.”

“But Claude really does merit all that Morey says of him.”

“That’s a matter of opinion,” said Brandon, his brows again turning inwards, which this time Margaret observed.

“You don’t think him clever, then?”

“I didn’t say that, but merely implied that

he might not be considered by some to merit Morey's extravagant praises of him."

"Extravagant ! that decides the matter. Do you think Morey's praises extravagant?"

"I think them injudicious."

"Why?"

"Because they are likely to make Threlfall vain and too self-confident."

"You are afraid he will lose the gold medal in his excess of confidence."

This was a slip of Margaret's. She had detected, as she thought, a feeling of professional jealousy in her lover, and it did not please her ; but she had no desire to wound his feelings, and she was now afraid she had done so. Brandon, though he winced again, affected not to be conscious of the thrust, and replied with the calmness of a complete self-possession—

"I was not thinking of the gold medal. He may, and he may not, get it ; but flattery is not wholesome diet for a man to live on every day of his life."

“ I don’t believe that Morey means it for flattery. He is quite sincere, I believe. It may sound to some like flattery, who do not know my brother, who is so very ardent and demonstrative in his feelings.”

“ Well, all I have to say is, that it’s a pity to spoil such a fellow as Threlfall by injudicious commendation.”

“ You must admit there is some reason for Morey’s admiration of his friend, Paul. By-the-bye, you have not seen Claude’s portrait of me, have you ?”

“ I was not aware that he had painted you.”

“ Oh ! yes, he has, and in my theatrical costume of Ophelia. I have dressed the character several times for him. I think you will say it’s a capital likeness. He certainly does paint admirably from nature.”

As Margaret said this, with all the simplicity and pleasure of creating an agreeable surprise, she looked at her lover as he lay

leaning his head on his arm in a half-sitting posture. In an instant she saw the indiscretion of what she had communicated, for her lover's face was darkened with an expression of unmistakeable displeasure, and only relieved by a glow of heat, which betokened something that was more than smouldering within. To hide his half-betrayed feelings he sprung to his feet, looking at his watch, and saying it was time he should return. He did not notice that Margaret had observed his disturbance, but in his confusion he had left her to get up from her position unassisted, and again indulged his habit of cutting at the tops of the grass with his walking cane.

Margaret made no further allusion to the portrait, or to Claude, and endeavoured to turn the conversation into a totally different channel.

“ I do like the early summer and the chattering of the birds, Paul; don't you?”

she said, taking his hand as she walked beside him.

“The early summer is not too hot, and the birds do not flatter, do they, Margie?”

“You can’t forget poor Morey, Paul. You’re a little hard on him.”

“I was not only thinking of Morey; I was thinking of Threlfall. It’s a pity to make him more conceited than he is.”

“I have not thought him in the least conceited; what makes you think he is?”

“I meet him, you know, in the living model and painting rooms, and see something of him.”

“And I see him at home, you must remember.”

“His conceit, then, may be purely professional, but conceited he is when among us. He’s no anatomist; he has not even attended one course of anatomy lectures, and yet he attempts the most difficult subjects, and

thinks he can draw the human form as well as anybody."

"Of course I know nothing of that. All I can say is, that at home he never impressed me with the idea that he was conceited."

"A real friend of Threlfall's, who was interested in his professional success, would advise him to be rather less in our dear Morey's company."

"Really, Paul, you're very severe on Morey. What makes you talk so much about Morey?"

"I am thinking of Threlfall rather than of Morey. To be plain, then, Margie, I mean that Threlfall, if he looked to his own interest, would look out for another home. But he's not likely to do that, and, therefore, you would be acting the part of a friend towards him to contrive some means of inducing him to board somewhere else."

"Indeed I should be very sorry for him to

leave us. Claude is very happy with us, and we both like him. Morey is as attached to Claude as if he were his own brother, and I think could hardly love a brother more dearly."

"Well, I merely speak thus candidly to you, Margie, out of regard to Threlfall. He is nothing to me but an acquaintance and fellow student. We are, I suppose, about the same age, and I should like to be friends."

"And so you are friends. Why should Claude's living with us interfere with your mutual friendship?"

"I don't like conceited fellows, that's all."

"You mean to say that we are making him conceited."

"Not you, Margie, of course not. I'm not afraid of you in the matter; but, if I may say so again without offence, I am afraid of Morey."

"Don't let us talk any more on this sub-

ject, Paul. We are late, and they'll be waiting tea for us ; let us quicken our steps."

"You must excuse me joining you at the tea-table this evening, Margie. I have another engagement."

"Oh ! do come in, you always take tea with us on Sundays."

"You must excuse me, indeed, this evening."

"Oh ! very well ; we'll excuse you."

Margaret said this with a little pique, as if she were annoyed with her lover ; but presently, afterwards, she talked on indifferent subjects, and indicated no feeling of annoyance. Indeed, she affected to be quite cheerful all the rest of the way home, and bade her lover good-bye at the door with an air of gaiety, without repeating her invitation.

Brandon turned away with clouded brows, muttering to himself. He had no other engagement, but he did not wish to meet Claude.

“She seems to be quite indifferent whether I go or stay.”

Paul Brandon should have taken the glass of fruity port which Morey poured out for him. It might, as he said, have sweetened his conversation, and added a pleasant zest to his walk.

CHAPTER XV.

CLOUD AND SUNSHINE.

MAGUIRE and Threlfall had reached home, and were awaiting the return of the lovers.

“Where’s Paul?” asked Maguire, when his sister came into the room to make tea, unaccompanied.

“He has asked to be excused as he has another engagement this evening,” replied Margaret.

“Not come in to tea! Another engagement! We shall have snow at the end of June!”

Margaret did not return any answer, but addressed herself to the duties of the tea-table. She had not her usual pleasant smile, for she had been keeping up a smiling exterior for the last quarter or half hour, and a reaction had set in. Maguire noticed this, and so did Threlfall, and each knew that something was wrong, or, at least, that the walk of the lovers had not been mutually satisfactory to them.

“I say, Peggy,” began Maguire, to recall his sister to herself, and make matters pleasant, “Claude and I have had a most enjoyable walk. We made sure that you had gone out in the direction of Hampstead and ventured to follow you at the risk of interrupting your little *tête-à-tête*.”

“I wish we had met you,” returned Margaret, “but we went in another direction.”

“What, out Kilburn way? I don’t like Kilburn; it’s flat low ground out that way. I’m never lively in Kilburn. You should have gone towards Hampstead; the ground

rises all the way, and my spirits always rise with the ascending pleasures of that country walk."

"You are always cheerful, Morey. I can't imagine that even the flats of Kilburn can ever bring your liveliness down to their level."

"Well, Claude and I have really had a most enjoyable walk; and what with the beauty of the day, the attractiveness of the country, and you for the subject of our conversation, the time has passed most pleasantly."

"Me as the subject of your conversation! You have not been talking scandal, I hope."

"Scandal! by Titian, no! Have we, Claude?"

"We are not of them," replied Claude, "who, in the words of your favourite bard, Margaret—

" 'Do fawn on men, and hug them hard,
And after scandal them.' "

"But not men, but a woman is in the case now, Claude," returned Margaret.

“And therefore more sacred from ‘black scandal or foul-faced reproach,’” rejoined Claude.

“Shakspeare seems to be your favourite poet, too, Claude: you quote him appositely and glibly.”

“Your presence quickens my memory, Margaret, and drives me to him for the expression of my thoughts.”

“You are very complimentary, Claude.”

“Hear! hear!” shouted Morey; “don’t say I lay it on thick in future, my modest friend.”

“I wish I knew how to lay it on thicker; it would be well deserved, and I should have no fear of censure, at least, from my own conscience.”

Margaret blushed, and Morey said, jocularly, that Claude had better try his flattering art on him.

“I could say something that would try your modesty; but I spare you, Morey.”

“Don’t spare me. I like compliments, and am not at all offended with a little flattery.”

“Well, have at you, you provoking fellow, and Margaret’s suggestive presence shall again give me words—

“Nay, do not think I flatter :
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee ?

* * * * *

Dost thou hear ?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath sealed thee for herself.

* * * * *

Give me that man
That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him
In my heart’s core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.’ ”

“Hold !” exclaimed Morey, “‘ something too much of this.’ ”

“You are both apt Shakspearians,” struck in Margaret.

“We have been talking of Shakspeare and you, Peggy, all the afternoon,” replied

Morey, "and Claude swears you'll play Ophelia finely."

"I thank Claude for his good opinion of me," returned Margaret, "and hope that everybody else will endorse it on the eventful night."

"Morey and I," said Claude, "will quicken the public expression of it by the enthusiasm of our own admiration."

"What, if the opinion is not concurrent with your own friendly feelings?" asked Margaret.

"We'll pitch the key-note of admiration from the critics' box; the multitude will be sure to follow such discriminating authority," returned Claude.

"I should like the expression of approval better if it were not prompted by the partiality of a friend."

"It will be simultaneous," said Claude; "I am sure but one feeling will animate all present, and that will satisfy you, Margaret."

“What is your opinion, Claude,” asked Margaret, “of Hamlet’s conduct to Ophelia?”

“It’s a painful scene, but quite natural, I think, considering the dreamy, introspective philosophising being Hamlet was, and the revelations of the ghost of his father. He had a mission of revenge, which engrossed his whole soul, and he lost all heart for the dalliances, and even the serious entertainment of love. I think this, hardly less than his astonishment at his mother’s early marriage with his father’s murderer, stanchd all feeling of the tender emotion of love, or, at least, obliged him to resist its indulgence. But it was a struggle to quench the gentle passion, showing plainly that he loved Ophelia. His feigning madness when he drives Ophelia from him was a generous deception to soften the blow he was inflicting, and was prompted by his love, which he felt he must sacrifice. Ophelia’s real madness, as the consequence, is a fine testimony of the great poet to the gentle unselfishness

of a true woman's love. Poor Ophelia's brain yielded to the violence of the shock, not her heart, which was gentle and lovingly demonstrative, as far as it could be, even in her madness. It's all true to nature, Margaret; at least, I think so."

"I quite agree with you, Claude. If you were a player I'd like you to be the Hamlet to my Ophelia."

"I should have to forget then that you are Margaret Maguire," replied Claude, with a hitherto unusual boldness in his gallantry.

"Of course," said Margaret, affecting not to observe the gallantry of his reply, though her blushes did not keep her affectation in countenance, "every true actor must realize the assumed characters of the other parts, and have only the consciousness of the part which he himself assumes. What is but a mimic scene in fact, must be to the player no mere illusion, but positive reality. He needs to be utterly insensible to the presence of an audience, and to be wholly absorbed in the

passions and actions of what is occurring on the stage, which must be to him, for the time at least, the world of real life. But let us leave my art, Claude, which I, as an actress, of course am enamoured of, and am always ready to exalt as having higher uses than merely to entertain, and talk of yours, which also holds, 'as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.' Yours is a difficult art, and, like mine, demands profound insight and careful study."

"I am scarcely as yet like you, Margaret—a performer—and my works are not worthy the public attention. I dare not challenge criticism—the criticism of the practised eye. I am but a student, and have as yet much to learn in the profounder mysteries of my art."

"I won't deny that, Claude," said Maguire, "for that would not be complimentary to our divine art, but, by St. Titian! your drawing is wonderful."

“I have studied with some care, I must candidly acknowledge, the form and attitudes of the human figure, and that species of perspective which we call foreshortening, but you know as well as I, Morey, that no man can be an artist in our branch of art till he has thoroughly mastered the human structure from the skeleton outwards, and can clothe the bony fabric with its muscles and tendons and flesh, and understand their action singly and in relation to the others. I have given some attention to these anatomical studies, with what advantages I had at Cambridge, but I am very imperfect as yet.”

“You have done wonders, Claude,” replied Maguire. “I am sure you must have some knowledge of anatomy to do what you have done.”

“A slight knowledge only, but I hope to improve. I think I can draw the human figure in any attitude and with some degree of fidelity; but I must know more of anatomy, that I may be able to delineate accurately the

movement and action of the muscles in every posture of the limbs. And then, you know, we have to ascend yet higher to the study of mind, that we may be able to express its various emotions, and in all their ever-varying degrees and intensity, not in the face alone, but in gesture, attitude, and the whole frame. Oh! Morey, this is a life's study and exercise, without which the most skilful drawing can never be more than merely mechanical, and utterly devoid of spiritual meaning and sentiment. But I love my art with all the ardour of the most passionate attachment, and I do not quail before its toils and difficulties."

"Quail! by Titian, no; you have no reason to quail, Claude. I am sure you must quite understand the internal structure and configuration of the human frame. Your proportions, too, are admirable, and you seem to me to know all about the purposes and functions of the muscles. Your knowledge of anatomy must be considerable. You have mastered

the rudiments, I'll swear, and have but to step out boldly into the higher walks of art and paint intellect, emotions, passions, and all the mental and moral phenomena of the soul. Claude, you have the stuff in you of a very great man, nay, you are a great man already."

"This is all your fault, Margaret," said Claude, "Morey won't be rational; I am glad at least that I know my own deficiencies. Don't say another word about art, pray, at least about my art."

Margaret had been listening, with evident expressions of interest, to this conversation between her brother and Claude, and more than once indicated some secret feeling of pleasure, for her face lightened up with a glow of genial animation and a friendly smile as she looked on Claude. Perhaps it was but another reaction from the feeling of disappointment at the absence of her lover. Was she thinking of Paul at this time? Undoubtedly; but she was thinking more particularly

of Paul's advice that she, as a friend of Claude, should contrive some delicate way of inducing him to change his abode for his own good. But why should she set herself any such delicate task, which now seemed more than ever unnecessary, and certainly was a very difficult task, even for a woman's ingenuity and aptitudes, and she was quite sure would be a very disagreeable one, at all events, for herself. Was Claude so very conceited as Paul had said? She did not think so; at least she had not discovered it. He was confident, bold, self-reliant, zealous, persevering, even ambitious, but he was not conceited. Margaret inwardly resolved that there was not the least necessity, not even for Claude's personal good, that he should cease to reside at Titian Villa, and that she would not be the person to induce him to quit. Claude Threlfall improved on acquaintance, and was a very agreeable addition to their small family. Indeed they would be now quite dull without him. Morey would certainly

miss him, and she couldn't help feeling and confessing to herself that she should miss him too.

“ I won't be guilty of any more faults,” she said, in reply to Claude's gentle chiding of her, “ unless it be a fault to ask you and Morey to light your cigars. You may smoke in this room, if you like, but I am going to enjoy this delightful evening in a lounge in the garden.”

CHAPTER XVI.

EXPLANATIONS.

THE London season was passed, the eventful night of Margaret's *début* in the character of Ophelia had come and gone, and the successful *débutante* was reposing on her well-earned laurels, as the principal London theatres were now closed. The play of "Hamlet" had been put upon the stage with surpassing magnificence of scenery and costume, regardless of expense, for this grand revival of Shakspeare's great play, in which a then eminent living artist was to perform

the great part of the melancholy prince, and an untried actress in the difficult part of the lady "most deject and wretched," was to make her first appearance in that character. The performance of Margaret was in every respect satisfactory, not only to an audience disposed to be lenient to a favourite young rising actress, but also to those dreadful personages the critics, all of whom united to compliment her, and predict her distinguished position in the dramatic profession. Margaret was very happy in the triumph which she had achieved, and Claude was even more lavish in the expression of his admiration than Morey, who was half-beside himself with joy, and prouder than ever of his dear Peggy, on whom he showered his most enthusiastic praises.

Autumn had set in, and everybody was thinking of recreation and preparing for the attractions of the country. Margaret had been invited to spend a couple of months with a middle-aged widow lady and her daughter,

both of whom were great patronesses of the mimic art, and resided in a beautiful marine residence in the Isle of Wight. Morey was preparing for his annual enjoyment of a sketching tour, and Claude, who had been taxing his ingenuity to frame a plausible excuse for not returning to Walmer, had at last devised a feasible plan for himself, and was making arrangements for carrying it out.

Claude had regularly corresponded during all these months with his friends at Walmer, occasionally writing to his uncle, and giving him the most satisfactory assurances of his progress in his professional studies. Like his talk with his uncle, Claude's letters, whenever reference was made—which, of course could not be avoided—to his special pursuit, were all worded in a very general, *ore rotundo*, style, which quite satisfied that confiding gentleman, and, at the same time, answered the writer's private designs. With Julia and Mary he was always communicative, acquainting them with his progress and the benefit he

derived from his attendance at the Academy. He had heard from Mary that Hawley Paget was expected at Dover in about ten days' time to spend his vacation, and, as he could not avoid to return home for some little time, however brief, he resolved to anticipate that gentleman, and to start at once to his uncle's house. It was Monday, and Margaret would be starting for the Isle of Wight on Thursday; Morey could not conveniently leave home till that day at the earliest, as he wished to see his sister off first.

“Well, on Thursday evening, Morey, you'll be at Dover. I'll meet you there in my uncle's trap, and take you back to Walmer. You'll find the Drum a snug, inexpensive, little inn. I'm confoundly vexed that I cannot introduce you to my uncle and offer you the hospitalities of the Grange, but you see it's quite out of the question; the governor would scent something, and it would be all up with me. However, the girls will

look after you, and help to make your stay there agreeable.”

“All right, Claude ; I quite understand the matter. I shall be glad to make your sister’s and cousin’s acquaintance, and we’ll do the thing between us very nicely. I’ll be at Dover on Thursday evening by the train you mention. Good-bye, old fellow, till we meet ;” and Claude took an affectionate farewell of Margaret and his friend, and was off to Walmer.

Seven months had elapsed since Claude had left home for London, and he was returning home now rather as a duty than from any very lively feeling of pleasure. He would gladly have avoided meeting his uncle if he could have done so with any appearance of decency, but he instinctively felt that, after so long an absence, he must, now the legal vacation had come, present himself at Walmer. Perhaps, he thought with himself, his uncle, who admired his legal zeal,

might think it a little excessive if he took no vacation at all. A week's holiday, therefore, would look natural, and withal respectful and affectionate on his part, but he would have been very glad indeed if he could have avoided this meeting. The fact was, though Claude was acting a deceptive part, he had his seasons of moral compunction, and he did not like to offend the delicacy of his conscience more than was absolutely necessary. He knew that he would be obliged to prevaricate a good deal, and that his inward monitor would give him some uneasiness. To keep up a system of deliberate hypocrisy and falsehood for a couple of years was really hard, and even painful work, and although more than a fourth of the time was expired, there were three-fourths yet remaining of Morey's allotted period, and he was too partial and confident a prophet to be quite relied on. The probability was that he would need to act his somewhat disagreeable part for some years to come. He remembered that Hamlet had said to his

two old school-fellows that to play on the pipe was as "easy as lying," but he knew Hamlet meant that lying was no easy matter, and he quite agreed with him. However, there was no help for it; home he must go, and home he went.

Mr. Threlfall received his nephew with warm cordiality, which a little tried Claude's moral complacency. The uncle expressed such hearty satisfaction with all that his nephew had communicated from time to time that a less sensitive conscience than Claude's would have winced under the scourges of self-reproach. Claude, however, took all these inward chidings as the inevitable penalty of his unfortunate position, and contrived to mollify their severity by casting the chief blame on the blindness and absurd prejudice of his uncle. Still he was very far from being altogether comfortable. Perhaps, he said to himself, if he had been after all a barrister, as his uncle wished him to be, his conscience might not have been so troublesome an ele-

ment in his moral constitution. His uncle was not Claude's only trouble. Mary had written him before he left London to express her disappointment that she should see her dear Claude only for a week, and wanted to know why he could not spend the long vacation with her at the Grange; and he had merely written to say that he should reserve all explanations till he saw her. Julia, too, had said in her correspondence, that she quite shared in Mary's disappointment, and could not imagine any explanation that would be at all satisfactory.

He had returned home, therefore, to give explanations, the hint of which had proved already to be most unpalatable. Would Mary be satisfied, and if she should be, which was not altogether likely, would Julia be more reconciled to them? He very much doubted this in Julia's case, however he might succeed with his cousin Mary. But his plans were all arranged. Morey would be coming down in a day or two, to perform his part of the con-

tract, and the thing must be gone through with. He was affectionately welcomed by his sister and cousin, but it was not so genial as he had been accustomed to, and he could not fail to observe it. On his part, too, there was some consciousness of restraint in the demonstrativeness of his pleasure at again meeting them, which did not improve the tone of their first interview. When people meet to make and receive explanations, there is always some incipient restraint and embarrassment, and therefore the sooner they are made and received the better it is for all parties concerned.

So Mary evidently thought, for the very first moment she and Julia could get Claude alone with them she began by saying—

“What a mystery you have been making about your not coming home for the vacation. And, pray why can’t you spend the time with us, Claude. You’ve been long enough away in all conscience.”

“Yes, I have been from home a long while

now, quite seven months. One thing was, I didn't care to write about my reason for not coming down here this autumn, and another was that I thought I could explain the matter more satisfactorily *viva voce*."

"Well, then, out with your explanations, and let's have done with mystery," said Mary, a little impatiently; "but you can't expect that we shall either like or approve of them."

"Certainly not, Claude," added Julia, in a plainly offended tone of voice. "We were quite expecting the pleasure of your society this vacation, after so long an absence, and now it appears we are to be disappointed."

"I never met two such unreasonable girls," replied Claude, evidently vexed.

"Unreasonable!" echoed Mary, "and, pray, do you consider yourself reasonable?"

"You won't hear the explanations I have to offer."

"Oh! yes we will," they replied, both at once, but with an air indicative of their most supreme contempt for his explanations.

“I don’t think I shall enter upon the matter at all now. You are both plainly hostile to anything I may have to propose, and I don’t see the use of saying anything on the subject.”

“You are quite altered, Claude,” said Mary. “We used to be everything to you, and now we seem to count for very little with you.”

“Altered, by Jove! and aren’t you two altered? Why, I have hardly been in the house a day, and you have both made up your minds to quarrel with me; I wish I hadn’t come down at all.”

“Now, don’t let us quarrel, Claude, in this stupid way.”

“It isn’t I that am quarrelling, but you.”

“Well, now it’s all over; and now at last give us your explanations.”

“What’s the use of explaining anything to two such unreasonable girls?”

“Come, who’s quarrelling now?” asked Mary.

“Well, and are you not unreasonable?”

“Certainly not ; and if we were, it is not polite to tell us so.”

“Well, Claude,” said Julia, with a look of reproof, “I didn’t expect such a first meeting as this.”

“Didn’t you, Julia ? Well, all I can say is, I did.”

“Perhaps you had good reason to expect it, Claude,” returned his sister.

“No, I had not ; but you are like all girls, so confoundedly impatient and prejudiced.”

“You certainly are very polite, Claude,” retorted Julia, offended.

“I think,” said Mary, “we are patient enough, however prejudiced we may be, for we have been waiting all this while for the explanations.”

“Will you hear me patiently, then ?”

“We’ll do our best, considering what impatient creatures we are, like all our sex.”

Claude was not at all in the mood to explain himself after such a commencement as this, but he knew that his sister and cousin must

be informed of his plans, and, what was of more consequence, must be got to approve, or at least acquiesce in, them, as they would be required to aid him in carrying them out. He therefore tried to soothe the irritation of his feelings, and made an effort to smooth his way by offering an apology for the language he had allowed himself to use in a moment of vexation.

“I didn’t mean that, you know, Polly,” he replied, in his usual friendly way; “but you might have some little feeling for me, seeing the fix I’m in with uncle.”

“We are all feeling for you,” replied his cousin, “or we shouldn’t have told and acted so many lies for your sake all these months.”

“I have told no lies, Mary,” said Julia.

“Oh! you’ve been more clever, Julia; I must say I have, and a good many, too. We have had plenty of manœuvring to keep the proper face on things, I can tell you, Claude, and if we had had only a little feeling and a good round lump of conscience we should

have broken our promise to you, and given up our task long ago."

"You haven't had much bother, Polly, surely? My letters made all straight for you."

"Did they, though? Papa has talked so much about you all this time, and of course has had so much to say to us and ask of us, that we have been telling fibs by the bushel."

"Indeed, Mary, I have done nothing of the kind," expostulated Julia.

"Well, you know as well as I do, Julie, that I have told, and looked, and demeaned a lot. I have been telling fibs every day for the last six months, and though I am now quite used to it, I take to it as the mill horse does to the drudgery of his monotonous work. I have been doing nothing else but feeling for you, Mr. Claude, all the time you have been away, and my indignant conscience has been giving it me pretty sharply, I can tell you."

"Well, you really are very good, Polly."

"Indeed, no! I think I am very naughty."

I hope I shall not have to go on telling lies for another six months ; I shall be black and blue with the thumpings of my angry conscience, if I go on even a month longer."

What was Claude to do with two such conscientious and afflicted young ladies as his sister and cousin ? How could he appeal again to their feelings, and ask them to be his accomplices in a further act of deception, when one, and she the most thick-skinned culprit of the two, complained of the smartings of the lash ?

"Well, I hope it won't be necessary much longer," he replied, with a look of sympathy, but recalling at the same time the question of Morey, whether he himself could keep it up for a couple of years.

"And then," continued Mary, "you must remember we have had a good deal of bother with Hawley about you. He has wondered you have never called on him, and has been several times to Gray's Inn in the hope of meeting you. He asked where you lived, and all we

could say was that you always dated from Gray's Inn, though you once talked of living in one of the suburbs. He has been so disappointed, and cannot understand why you have not been to his rooms. We told him that you would be at home in the vacation, and he has written to say that he shall come to spend a few days with you at the Grange.'

"I think Hawley is not only disappointed but pained, Claude," added Julia.

"Well, I really am very sorry, Julie, to have annoyed Hawley, but you must see that it would have added immensely to my difficulties if I had been thick with him."

"I wish you had never placed yourself in these difficulties," returned his sister; "I am sure I shall never be reconciled to the part you're playing, which I have never ceased to think is decidedly wrong."

"Now don't let us open up the rights and wrongs of the case again, Julie. We talked on those matters before I went to London; and then, you must remember, it was not I

who placed myself in these difficulties, but uncle."

"You might make your painting subordinate to your duties as one studying for the Bar."

"Now, look here, Julie, how small is the difference between you and me in this thing. You know I'm keeping my terms at my Inn. It's just a question between us which shall be first in my regards;—you would have the Bar; I must have, by the irresistible stimulus of nature, painting. That's all the difference. Now don't let us disagree any more on the subject."

"You really are keeping your terms?"

"I am. I have kept every one up to this time."

"How we have run away from the point! Now then for the explanations; I am dying to know what you have got to say for yourself," said Mary.

"The case is, in few words, just this," replied Claude, glad to have paved the way a

little more pleasantly for himself. “You know I have told you all about my success at the Academy. Well, of course time is everything to me, and I should be immensely benefited if I could have the advantage of a few months’ study in Italy ; you know, all painters who aspire to celebrity, or wish to succeed in their art, must study the examples of the great masters of the different schools of painting. Italy abounds in these grand works, and to the painter is itself classic ground. Now look here, don’t interrupt me till I have done—I want to take advantage of the next three months’ leisure from my legal duties to go to Italy for this purpose.”

“The thing is preposterous, Claude,” interjected Julie.

“How can we ever conceal the matter from papa ?” asked Mary.

“There you are—so impatient. Now do hear me out, and don’t interrupt me.”

“Three months in Italy, Claude !” exclaimed Julie, with the surprise of incredulity.

“And think of the expense, Claude,” added Mary.

“Do hear me out,” repeated Claude, annoyed at these interruptions.

“And are you going to be silent for three months?” asked his sister.

“You know, you can’t write from Italy home, Claude, and how shall we hear from you?” and Mary looked triumphant in her objection as she suggested this insuperable difficulty.

“Once more, let me proceed. I’ll show you how; I’ll answer all your questions if you will but give me time,” remonstrated Claude.

“Well, let us hear the explanations,” interposed Mary.

“We have certainly heard none as yet,” said Julia.

“Of course not,” expostulated Claude; “you will keep interrupting me.”

“And we are not to see you for three months, Claude?” asked Julia, disappointedly.

“And you have been seven months from home already!” rejoined Mary.

“And you’ll never be able to write to uncle or any of us?” continued Julia.

“Of course not, Claude, for the postmark would betray you,” suggested Mary.

“Am I to go on or not?” asked Claude, losing his temper again at these interruptions.

“Certainly—go on,” said Julia; “we are waiting all this time for the explanations.”

“Yes, go on with your explanations,” chimed in Mary, “but for the life of me I can’t see what explanations you can give.”

“Nor I,” agreed Julia, “I don’t believe the thing should be entertained for one moment. It’s preposterous, Claude.”

“I really must say, Claude, that I do not think Julie speaks a bit too strong; it does look preposterous.”

“It’s monstrous,” exclaimed Julia, encouraged by the countenance of her cousin.

“ Well, yes, I think it is, Julie, not merely preposterous but monstrous !”

“ You are both just like all the rest of the women,” said Claude warmly, “ prejudging you know not what ; answering a question before you have heard it.”

“ We have been waiting all this while for the explanations,” said Julia.

“ Are you going to give us the explanations, Claude,” asked Mary, provokingly.

“ D—— it no ! Yes !” exploded Claude, unable to control either his temper or language.

“ You need not be so excited,” said Julia, reproving her brother, “ we have simply been asking for explanations.”

“ Yes, that is all, Claude,” added Mary, propitiatingly, “ we are quite ready to hear the explanations.”

“ I don’t know where I left off,” said Claude, “ you would keep interrupting me so. What

I said was, that I wished to go to Italy for two or three months."

"You said three months, Claude, before; it was that which surprised us so," observed Mary.

"Well, I say now two or three months."

"Then you'll be home long before Christmas?" again asked this persistent interrupter.

"You'll spend a good long Christmas with us, Claude? Of course you ought to," said Julia.

"Certainly, Claude will, we shall quite expect that, you know," said Mary.

"Oh! yes, I shall hope to spend a longer Christmas with you than I did last time."

"But it's a long time to Christmas," sighed Julia.

"And sha'n't we see you till just before Christmas, Claude?" asked Mary, who seemed to be counting up the months.

"Of course you will, but am I to go on with what we were talking about?"

“ Yes, pray go on,” said Mary, “ we have not yet heard the explanations. What a mystery you do make about the explanations, Claude.”

“ You won’t let me make the revelations. But to try once more. Now, Julia, if you say another word (Julia was just about to speak again), I’ll give the matter up ; I won’t speak another word.”

“ Don’t interrupt Claude, Julie,” said Mary, coaxingly.

“ Well, I was saying, perhaps you may both of you remember, that I wish to be in Italy for two or three months. During my absence my friend, Morey Maguire, will be the medium of communication with you. He is coming down here to sketch for a month or six weeks, and will be able to give my letters, which I will direct to him, to you ; and when he returns to town he will post them in due course.”

“ Morey Maguire ! Claude,” said Julia, “ we don’t know Mr. Maguire.”

“Oh! I’m going to introduce him to you this week.”

“But are we expected to be in constant personal communication with Mr. Maguire, Claude?” asked Julia again.

“Oh, that won’t be a difficult matter, you know, Julie,” said Mary, “after Claude has introduced him to us. I have often wished to see this Mr. Maguire, after all you have said about him, Claude. You always call him Morey, don’t you?”

“Yes, and he will be all the better pleased if you, both of you, call him Morey, too. He’s a most friendly fellow.”

“What nonsense, Claude,” exclaimed his sister, “how can you expect us to address a stranger by his Christian name?”

“As you please; he won’t be a stranger long. Morey’s soon at home with his friends. But now to account to uncle for my absence all this while. I shall tell him I’m going on circuit; uncle will, as usual, applaud my legal

zeal, and the thing will all be managed nicely."

"Nicely! do you call it, Claude?" said his sister, blushing for him. "I call it most shamefully deceptive."

"There you are, Julie, hammering away at the old topic. You know, as well as I, that I have no alternative but this little bit of innocent deception."

Julia was not at all convinced.

"What, three months more fibbing for us, Claude?" said Mary, opening wide her eyes.

"It may be only two months, Polly."

"If my conscience kills me outright by the end of two months, well, the fault won't be mine."

"You needn't exactly tell fibs, you know, Polly."

"I shall tell none, you may be quite sure of that, Claude," said Julia, with virtuous dignity.

"I don't want you, Julie; what nonsense

you are both talking. You have only to say that I have gone on circuit. What matters where the circuit may happen to be? I am going on circuit in Italy, and shall circulate pretty freely through the galleries of Florence. You surely don't call that a fib?"

"Indeed, I do," replied Julia, emphatically. "I only wish you would spend a few days with Hawley, and hear his opinion on the subject of falsehood. I have never learnt Latin, but you have, and I dare say you would understand the nice moral distinctions which Hawley would point out to you, under the phrases *suggestio falsi* and *suppressio veri*, and something else, meaning the lie direct. Of course, you'll see Hawley before you leave us again?"

Claude did not answer the question, but he inwardly resolved, for more reasons than one, that he would not.

CHAPTER XVII.

MOREY MAGUIRE HEARS INTERESTING NEWS.

It was a much easier task, Claude found, to convince his uncle of the propriety of his going on circuit, than to convince his cousin and sister. Mr. Threlfall at first expressed some disappointment that his nephew would only spend a week with them at the Grange. He had quite hoped for the pleasure of his society for a few weeks in the Isle of Wight, whither he intended to take his daughter and niece for a change of scene and air, although

he had not mentioned his intentions as yet to them.

But Claude had so impressed on him the value of time and the great professional advantages of going on circuit, that, in the warmth of his admiration of his nephew's zeal, he had not only consented, but had said that, in addition to the second half-year's allowance which he had already remitted to him in London, he should add a £50 note for the expenses of travelling.

As for Mary and Julia, they continued their objections and expostulations up to the very day of Morey Maguire's arrival, and it was with the utmost difficulty, and only after the most earnest persuasion, that he could get them to agree to his plans. In the end, however, they consented, and Claude had surmounted his greatest difficulties in the way of his anxious project.

When Morey arrived at the Drum, in company with Claude from Dover, he was at once made sensible that the office he had under-

taken for his friend would not be a very disagreeable one, and that he might look forward to a very pleasant sojourn in the retired neighbourhood of Walmer. As a friend of the Threlfalls he was received by the landlady with very marked attention, and his eye was instantly arrested by some other attentions which were much too conspicuous to be overlooked. A side table contained several plates of choice fruits, some of which must have come from the hot-house of somebody's garden, and bouquets of flowers added to the luxuries and fragrance of the room. On the sideboard stood likewise a small plump ham, and a couple of roast fowls, and a basket of splendid Spanish new-laid eggs. That all these attentions had been shown him by the inhabitants of the Grange he did not doubt for one moment.

“By St. Titian!” he exclaimed, as soon as he caught sight of this magnificent display of creature comforts, “the ladies have been too considerate of me, Claude. You should have

checked this exuberance of hospitality, you should, indeed ! I'm ashamed to have been all this trouble to them."

" Trouble to them, old fellow ! not the least trouble ; positive pleasure. They're only annoyed that circumstances forbid them offering you the hospitalities of the Grange."

" What flowers, Claude ! Van Huysum and De Heem would have gloried in such subjects for their pencil."

" Well, now I must be off. The Governor will wonder where I've been all this time. I think you'll be comfortable here for two or three weeks. You'll find your way to the Copse I pointed out as we came along ? Tomorrow at ten o'clock I shall bring the girls there to make your acquaintance."

" All right, old fellow ; good-bye, I shall take a stroll down to Deal this evening, and look about me."

Morey Maguire was the only visitor to the little inn, and consequently enjoyed the very particular attention of the landlady, who was

very chatty, as country landladies generally are, and indulged in very free conversation with her occasional guests about her neighbours, all whose concerns were, of course, very interesting, and quite familiar to her.

“You came under pleasanter circumstances, sir,” she began, while busy laying the cloth for Maguire’s supper, “than the last visitor we had to the Grange. Poor gentleman ! we quite thought he was dead.”

“A visitor to the Grange met with an accident here ?” said Maguire, looking up inquiringly at the landlady.

“Oh ! yes, haven’t you heard all about it, sir ?”

“No, I don’t know what you refer to.”

Claude had once or twice mentioned something of Hawley Paget to his friend, but he had forgotten who the gentleman was, and what his relations to the family of the Threlfalls.

“Oh ! I wonder they never told you all about it. Well, you must know, last winter

—what a winter it was, wasn't it? I never remember such a winter in all my life. Why, the snow was two feet deep everywhere; and the drift! It was frightful! We were all snowed up, and would you believe Mr. Paget, poor young gentleman, ventured to walk all the way from Dover here with a little port-manteau! Well, to cut a long story short, he sat down to rest himself. You know how dangerous that is, of course, sir, and he fell asleep, and was well near being frozen to death."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Maguire.

"Yes, he was almost gone, when, as luck would have it, two men found him and managed—how I don't know—to bring him here. We put him into a warm bath and brought him to. I thought he was dead, clean gone, sir. It was a narrow escape. What mischief love does do, sir, doesn't it?"

"Love!" said Mr. Maguire, "was Mr. Paget in love with anybody out here?"

"Oh! yes, to be sure. No one but a man

in love would a' come out such weather as that. Between ourselves, that Mr. Paget came over to see Miss Threlfall—Mr. Threlfall's daughter, you know, sir. A very nice young lady is Miss Threlfall, is she not, sir? Of course you know her, and the other young lady, Mr. Claude Threlfall's sister?"

Maguire did not profess his ignorance of two young ladies who had been so attentive to him, and whose ham and fowls were being at that moment laid on the table, so he made an acquiescing sign with his head, which the landlady naturally accepted as an assurance that he was well acquainted with the Misses Threlfall.

"Oh! yes, Mr. Paget is in love with Mr. Threlfall's daughter. That was the cause of it all. He seems a very nice gentleman, and I hope they'll be very happy together. Do you take ale or stout, sir?"

And the landlady, having received her orders for a bottle of pale ale, left her guest to his own reflections.

“ Claude’s cousin’s engaged, then, to this brave, gallant Mr. Paget. I fancy I have heard Claude speak of this Mr. Paget, after all ; but I don’t remember that he ever said his cousin was engaged to him. Perhaps I shall have the honour of making his acquaintance too. He must be a hot lover to walk all the way from Dover here, in snow two feet deep, and over drifts like small mountains. By Titian ! I like to see a man in earnest ; that Mr. Paget must be worth knowing, and Claude’s cousin must be a fascinating girl.”

Morey Maguire was very susceptible of female charms, and delighted in female society. He had looked forward to this visit to Walmer with much pleasure, as affording him the opportunity of seeing these two young ladies, and being on terms of almost intimacy with them. The delicacy of the function he had to perform would necessarily place him in very frank and friendly relations with them. “ So this Mr. Paget is the accepted lover of Miss Mary Threlfall !” he said to himself, as he

finished his supper and lighted a cigar. "I wonder whether Claude's sister Julia is engaged too."

The question seemed a very interesting one to Maguire, for after smoking his cigar he lit another, and went out for a short stroll before going to bed. He wandered about for at least an hour, trying to imagine what Julia was like. "Like Claude, not a doubt of it," he said "good-looking I'll swear, and clever too. Why, surely Claude once said that his sister was engaged to somebody, but I must have misunderstood him; it must have been his cousin. The first opportunity I'll ask him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONSPIRATORS RENDEZVOUS AT THE COPSE.

THE summer of this year had set in almost with the spring, and had continued with scarcely any interruption up to the present time. A little rain fell occasionally, but generally during the nights, which only contributed to the health of vegetation, and the refreshment and luxuriance of the day. And still the weather was gloriously fine, and the sun shone with a fiery brilliance and splendour unobscured by the flimsiest of floating vapours, which glistened and shivered like a magic

veil as it evaporated but never gathered into clouds in the day time, and served only to intensify the sensation of glowing heat. The harvest had all been gathered in a fortnight earlier than had been known for many years. It was on such a morning that Maguire left the Drum to keep his appointment at the Copse with the other conspirators in this deep-laid Claudian plot. The hour was fixed at ten; but Maguire, attracted by the beauty and freshness of the morning, had arrived at the rendezvous, and was seated under his expansive umbrella, and at work by the time his watch marked nine. He wore a light tourist's suit, and a white felt broad-brimmed hat, beneath which his abundant light brown curls fell in apparently unstudied gracefulness. By the time he was expecting his colleagues, he had made considerable progress with his water-colour sketch, which included the Grange, about a quarter of a mile distant, and which he recognised again as Claude had pointed it out in their drive. From his posi-

tion, he could only see a small portion of the winding road, which led hither from the Grange, and, as Claude and the ladies had not taken the road but come across the fields, where some small patches of wood lay in their way and afforded an agreeable shelter from the sun, they were almost close to him before he was apprised of their approach by the shout of Claude.

“Morey, old fellow, here we are; the girls are dying to make your acquaintance. My cousin, Miss Mary; my sister, Miss Julia Threlfall; Mr. Morey Maguire,” he said, introducing them to each other. “There now, you see for yourselves what sort of fellow my friend Morey is; the handsomest, wickedest, jolliest scamp in the Academy.”

This confidential introduction by the boisterous Claude caused a slight blush to mantle the cheeks of the ladies, but it was soon dissipated by the easy hearty manner of Maguire, who assured them that he was not entitled to

claim any one of the distinctions which his friend had credited him with.

“What are you about, Morey?” said Claude, taking up the picture which Morey had laid down. “By Jove! that’s pretty; look here, Polly, when will you paint like that, eh?”

Mary admired the skill of the painter, and thought the picture extremely pretty. Julia expressed herself still more warmly, and was quite in love with it. The Grange was such a pretty object in the mid distance, with its group of trees, she said.

“You like the picture, Miss Julia?” asked Maguire. “Will you do me the favour to accept it when it is finished?”

Julia blushed at this polite offer, and accepted it with very great pleasure.

“I tell you, Julie,” said Claude, “that picture will be worth something when Morey turns it off. Look at the graceful forms of that foliage, and the air there is in the pic-

ture—warm, isn't it? You may actually feel the warmth of the morning sun as you look at it."

"Your brother, Miss Julia, never sees any faults in his friends," said Maguire.

"Faults !" exclaimed Claude, "why the sketch reminds me of the special excellences of my great namesake, of Lorraine. No one could paint foliage finer than Claude Lorraine, and his aerial effects, whether cool or warm, are magical. And look at those cattle, why they are worthy of Cuyp."

"Claude, you're an incorrigible flatterer," said Morey, not altogether displeased with the complimentary notices of his sketch.

"I shall value it very much," said Julia.

"It will be a great pleasure to me, Miss Julia, to finish it for your acceptance," returned the artist, with a graceful bow.

"Well, now to business," said Claude, after this agreeable commencement. "The ladies understand all about the matter, Morey. I shall write frequently, and tell you all about

myself, and send all my letters to the Grange under cover to you. That's all understood and settled. You'll see my sister and cousin daily, no doubt, for Polly will be delighted to see you paint ; she's a painter herself. Can't you do something in the piquant style of Watteau, Morey ? We'll go down into that little dell, and you can paint us there. Come along, group us to your taste, and then sketch away. Julie has great dramatic taste, and will be sure to want the picture when it's done."

Maguire, who at first regarded this as but a joke of his friend's, when he heard that Julia was fond of the drama, treated the proposal seriously, and offered to make the sketch after Watteau's manner. It was quite a Watteau subject, and he thought he could make a pretty picture of it with a little liberty of imagination in the surroundings of the scene. As the painter was in earnest, the proposal was at once acted on, and some playful amusement was made by Maguire's fastidiousness in the grouping of the party and the

arrangement of the drapery. Maguire, when all the preliminaries were settled to his satisfaction, set to work and made the outline of his sketch with a rapid but accurate hand. All the while the picture was in progress, talking went on, and even fun was permissible without interfering with the artist's work. The first sitting occupied some time, as all were pleased with the conceit and amused with each other. By the time it was necessary to make a move homeward to join Uncle Threlfall at lunch, the ladies were both of them quite at home with their new acquaintance. Both expressed personally their very great regret that Mr. Maguire could not be their guest at the Grange, but they hoped he found everything comfortable at the Drum. Maguire walked part of the way back with his friends, and after arranging for the second sitting on the morrow, turned in the direction of his inn.

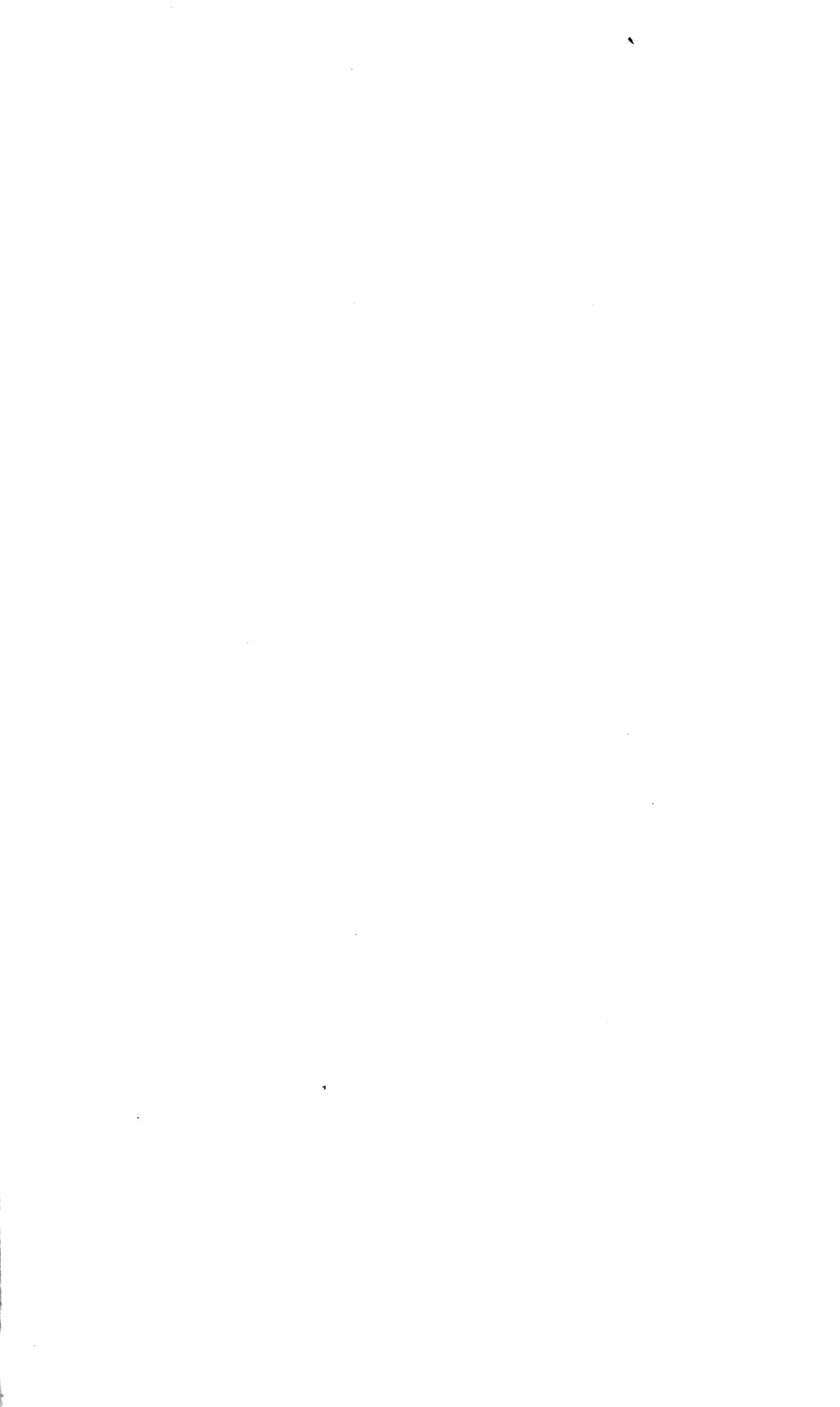
“By Titian !” said Morey, as he sat at his early dinner that day, “ a capital suggestion

that of Claude's. I'll take some pains with that drawing and make a good picture of it: Watteau's figures are not first-rate, though graceful and piquant, as Claude said. I'll follow his rich harmonious colouring and easy gracefulness, and make each one a portrait. By Titian, something may come of this Watteau conceit! Julia is certainly a pretty girl, and a very agreeable one too. I'll take pains with her portrait and figure, and make her a present of the picture. I wonder whether she's engaged? I'll ask Claude to-morrow. No, I won't; he'll think I'm smitten. No, I'll find it out some other way; I'll say nothing to Claude. Fond of the drama, too, not ashamed of the stage. By Jove! I like the girl. How particularly she spoke about my comfort here! Comfortable, by Titian! I am comfortable! She sent this ham and all the rest of the things; not a doubt of it, it was at her suggestion. A delicious little ham," helping himself to another slice. "Couldn't have a more agreeable occupation than to be the

accomplice of these agreeable young ladies. I wish Claude would be off. He has no time to lose ; and then I shall have to meet them on the sly. We shall make our own assignations. How jolly ! Sha'n't we be intimate ? Oh ! I shall find out whether she's engaged or no. She's not engaged, I'll swear. No, Julia's not engaged. I don't think Julia's engaged."

With these thoughts revolving in his mind Maguire, after dinner, threw himself on the couch, and was soon sound asleep.

END OF VOL. I.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 046417918